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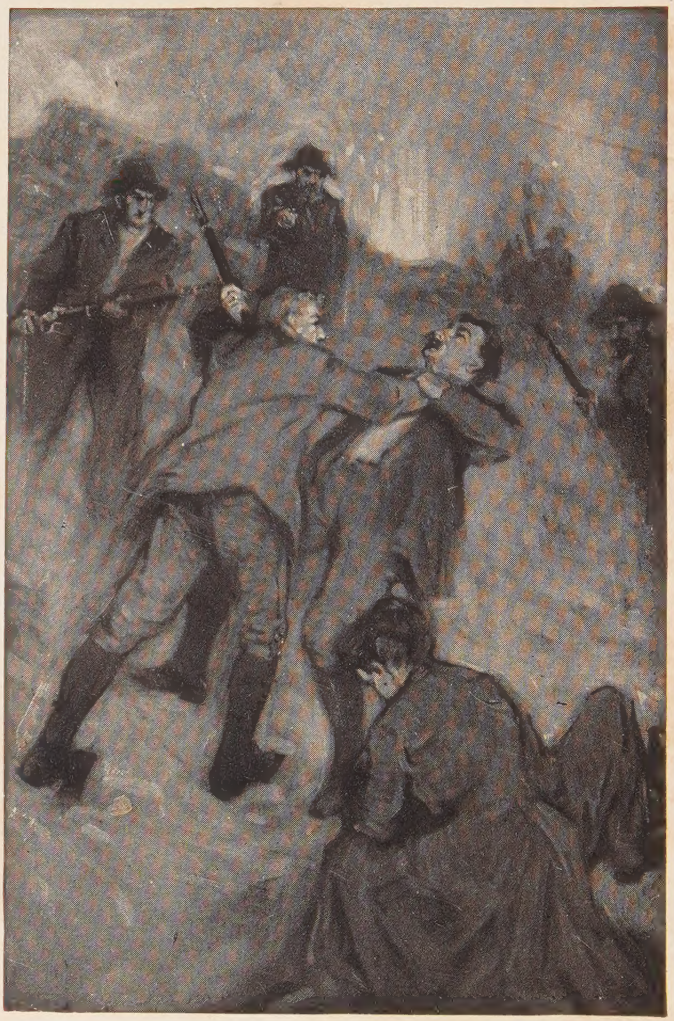

THEN JASON fell on the guards with his bare hands only

THE "GREEBA CASTLE" EDITION
A COMPLETE EDITION OF THE
WORKS OF HALL CAINE

THE BONDMAN

THE BLIND MOTHER

THE LAST CONFESSION

BY

HALL CAINE

ILLUSTRATED

P. F. COLLIER & SON
NEW YORK

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NOTE

THE central date of this story (a Saga in the only sense accepted among Icelanders) is 1800, when Iceland, in the same year as Ireland, lost the last visible sign of her ancient independence as a nation. But, lest the historical incidents that stand as a background to simple human passions should seem to clash at some points, I hasten to say that I have not thought it wise to bind myself to the strict chronology of history, Manx or Icelandic, for some years before and after. I am partly conscious that the Iceland I have described is the Iceland of an earlier era; but Icelanders will not object to my having tried to bring within my too narrow limits much of what is beautiful and noble and firing to enthusiasm in their old habits, customs, and laws. To the foolish revolt which occurred at Reykjavik early in this century I have tried to give the dignity of a serious revolution such as, I truly think, Icelanders may yet make in order to become masters in their own house. For a great deal of my data toward this sort of secondary interest I am indebted to many books, Icelandic and English; and for some personal help I owe my thanks to Herra Jon A. Hjaltalin of Modruvellir, who is not, however, to be charged with my mistakes—too numerous, I have no doubt. For my descriptions of Icelandic scenes and character I can claim no authority but that of my own observation.

H. C.

HAWTHORNS,
KESWICK.

THE BONDMAN

"VENGEANCE IS MINE—I WILL REPAY"

PROEM

THERE is a beautiful Northern legend of a man who loved a good fairy, and wooed her and won her for his wife, and then found that she was no more than a woman after all. Grown weary, he turned his back upon her and wandered away over the mountains; and there, on the other side of a ravine from where he was, he saw, as he thought, another fairy, who was lovely to look upon and played sweet music and sang a sweet song. Then his heart was filled with joy and bitterness, and he cried, "Oh, that the gods had given me this one to wife and not the other." At that, with mighty effort and in great peril, he crossed the ravine and made toward the fairy, and she fled from him; but he ran and followed her and overtook her and captured her and turned her face to his face that he might kiss her, and lo! *she was his wife!*

This old folk-tale is half my story—the play of emotions as sweet and light as the footsteps of the shadows that flit over a field of corn.

There is another Northern legend of a man who thought he was pursued by a troll. His ricks were fired, his barns unroofed, his cattle destroyed, his lands blasted, and his first-born slain. So he lay in wait for the monster where it lived in the chasms near his house, and in the darkness of night he saw it. With a cry he rushed upon it, and gripped it about the waist, and it turned upon him and held him by the shoulder. Long he wrestled with it, reeling, staggering, falling and rising again; but at length a flood of strength came to him and he overthrew it, and stood over it, covering it, conquering it, with its back across his thigh and his right hand set hard at its throat. Then he drew his knife to kill it, and the moon shot through a rack of cloud, opening an alley of light about it, and he saw its face, and lo! *the face of the troll was his own!*

This is the other half of my story—the crash of passions as bracing as a black thunderstorm.

CHAPTER I

STEPHEN ORRY, SEAMAN, OF STAPPEN

In the latter years of last century, H. Jorgen Jorgensen was Governor-General of Iceland. He was a Dane, born in Copenhagen, apprenticed to the sea on board an English trader, afterward employed as a petty officer in the British navy, and some time in the command of a Danish privateer in an alliance of Denmark and France against England. A rover, a schemer, a shrewd man of affairs, who was honest by way of interest, just by policy, generous by strategy, and who never suffered his conscience, which was not a good one, to get the better of him.

In one of his adventures he had sailed a Welsh brig from Liverpool to Reykjavik. This had been his introduction to the Icelandic capital, then a little, hungry, creeping settlement, with its face toward America and its wooden feet in the sea. It had also been his introduction to the household of the Welsh merchant, who had a wharf by the old Canning basin at Liverpool, a counting-house behind his residence in Wolstenholme Square, and a daughter of five and twenty. Jorgen, by his own proposal, was to barter English produce for Icelandic tallow. On his first voyage he took out a hundred tons of salt, and brought back a heavy cargo of lava for ballast. On his second voyage he took out the Welshman's daughter as his wife, and did not again trouble to send home an empty ship.

He had learned that mischief was once more brewing between England and Denmark, had violated his English letters of marque and run into Copenhagen, induced the authorities there, on the strength of his knowledge of English affairs, to appoint him to the Governor-Generalship of Iceland (then vacant) at a salary of four hundred pounds a year, and landed at Reykjavik with the Icelandic flag, of the white falcon on the blue ground—the banner of the Vikings—at the masthead of his father-in-law's Welsh brig.

Jorgen Jorgensen was then in his early manhood, and the strong heart of the good man did not decline with years, but rode it out with him through life and death. He had always intended to have a son and build up a family. It was the sole failure of his career that he had only a daughter. That had been a disaster for which he was not accountable, but he prepared himself to make a good end of a bad beginning. With God's assistance and his own extreme labor he meant to marry his daughter to Count Trol-

lop, the Danish Minister for Iceland, a functionary with five hundred a year, a house at Reykjavik, and another at the Danish capital.

This person was five-and-forty, tall, wrinkled, powdered, oiled, and devoted to gallantry. Jorgen's daughter, resembling her Welsh mother, was patient in suffering, passionate in love, and fierce in hatred. Her name was Rachel. At the advent of Count Trollop she was twenty, and her mother had then been some years dead.

The Count perceived Jorgen's drift, smiled at it, silently acquiesced in it, took even a languid interest in it, arising partly out of the Governor's position and the wealth the honest man was supposed to have amassed in the rigorous exercise of a place of power, and partly out of the daughter's own comeliness, which was not to be despised. At first the girl, on her part, neither assisted her father's designs nor resisted them, but showed complete indifference to the weighty questions of whom she should marry, when she should marry, and how she should marry; and this mood of mind contented her down to the last week in June that followed the anniversary of her twenty-first birthday.

That was the month of Althing, the national holiday of fourteen days, when the people's law-givers—the Governor, the Bishop, the Speaker, and the Sheriffs—met the people's delegates and some portion of the people themselves at the ancient Mount of Laws in the valley of Thingvellir, for the reading of the old statutes and the promulgation of the new ones, for the trial of felons and the settlement of claims, for the making of love and the making of quarrels, for wrestling and horse-fighting, for the practise of arms and the breaking of heads. Count Trollop was in Iceland at this celebration of the ancient festival, and he was induced by Jorgen to give it the light of his countenance. The Governor's company set out on half-a-hundred of the native ponies, and his daughter rode between himself and the Count. During that ride of six or seven long Danish miles Jorgen settled the terms of the intended transfer to his own complete contentment. The Count acquiesced and the daughter did not rebel.

The lonely valley was reached, the tents were pitched, the Bishop hallowed the assembly with solemn ceremonies, and the business of Althing began. Three days the work went on, and Rachel wearied of it; but on the fourth the wrestling was started, and her father sent for her to sit with him on the Mount and to present at the end of the contest the silver-buckled belt to the champion of all Iceland. She obeyed the summons with indifference, and took

a seat beside the Judge, with the Count standing at her side. In the space below there was a crowd of men and boys, women and children, gathered about the ring. One wrestler was throwing every one that came before him. His name was Patricksen, and he was supposed to be descended from the Irish, who settled, years ago, on the Westmann islands. His success became monotonous; at every fresh bout his self-confidence grew more insufferable, and the girl's eyes wandered from the spectacle to the spectators. From that instant her indifference fell away.

By the outskirts of the crowd, on one of the lower mounds of the Mount of Laws, a man sat with his head in his hand, with elbow on his knee. His head was bare, and from his hairy breast his woolen shirt was thrown back by reason of the heat. He was a magnificent creature—young, stalwart, fair-haired, broad-chested, with limbs like the beech tree, and muscles like its great gnarled round heads. His coat, a sort of sailor's jacket, was coarse and torn; his stockings, reaching to his knees, were cut and brown. He did not seem to heed the wrestling, and there rested upon him the idle air of the lusty Icelander—the languor of the big, tired animal. Only, when at the close of a bout a cheer rose and a way was made through the crowd for the exit of the vanquished man, did he lift up his great slow eyes—gray as those of a seal, and as calm and lustreless.

The wrestling came to an end. Patricksen justified his Irish blood, was proclaimed the winner, and stepped up to the foot of the Mount that the daughter of the Governor might buckle about him his champion's belt. The girl went through her function listlessly, her eyes wandering to where the fair-haired giant sat apart. Then the Westmann islander called for drink that he might treat the losing men, and having drunk himself, he began to swagger afresh, saying that they might find him the strongest and lustiest man that day at Thingvellir, and he would bargain to throw him over his back. As he spoke he strutted by the bottom of the Mount, and the man who sat there lifted his head and looked at him. Something in the glance arrested Patricksen and he stopped.

"This seems to be a lump of a lad," he said. "Let us see what we can do with him."

And at that he threw his long arms about the stalwart fellow, squared his broad hips before him, thrust down his head into his breast until his red neck was as thick as a bullock's, and threw all the strength of his body into his arms that he might lift the man out of his seat. But he moved him not an inch. With feet that held the earth like the hoofs of an ox, the young man sat unmoved.

Then those who had followed at the islander's heels for the liquor he was spending first stared in wonderment at his failure, and next laughed in derision of his bragging, and shouted to know why, before it was too late, the young man had not taken a bout at the wrestling, for that he who could hold his seat so must be the strongest-limbed man between the fells and the sea. Hearing this Patricksen tossed his head in anger, and said it was not yet too late, that if he took home the champion's belt it should be no rude bargain to master or man from sea to sea, and buckled though it was, it should be his who could take it from its place.

At that word the young fellow rose, and then it was seen that his right arm was useless, being broken between the elbow and the wrist, and bound with a kerchief above the wound. Nothing loth for this infirmity, he threw his other arm about the waist of the islander, and the two men closed for a fall. Patricksen had the first grip, and he swung to it, thinking straightway to lay his adversary by the heels; but the young man held his feet, and then, pushing one leg between the legs of the islander, planting the other knee into the islander's stomach, thrusting his head beneath the islander's chin, he knuckled his left hand under the islander's rib, pulled toward him, pushed from him, threw the weight of his body forward, and like a green withe Patricksen doubled backward with a groan. Then at a rush of the islander's kinsmen, and a cry that his back would be broken, the young man loosed his grip, and Patricksen rolled from him to the earth, as a clod rolls from the plowshare.

All this time Jorgen's daughter had craned her neck to see over the heads of the people, and when the tussle was at an end, her face, which had been strained to the point of anguish, relaxed to smiles, and she turned to her father and asked if the champion's belt should not be his who had overcome the champion. But Jorgen answered no—that the contest was done, and judgment made, and he who would take the champion's belt must come to the next Althing and earn it. Then the girl unlocked her necklace of coral and silver spangles, beckoned the young man to her, bound the necklace about his broken arm close up by the shoulder, and asked him his name.

"Stephen," he answered.

"Whose son?" said she.

"Orrysen—but they call me Stephen Orry."

"Of what craft?"

"Seaman, of Stappen, under Snaefell."

The Westmann islander had rolled to his legs by this time, and

now he came shambling up, with the belt in his hand and his sullen eyes on the ground.

"Keep it," he said, and flung the belt at the girl's feet, between her and his adversary. Then he strode away through the people, with curses on his white lips and the veins of his squat forehead large and dark.

It was midnight before the crowds had broken up and straggled away to their tents, but the sun of this northern land was still half over the horizon, and its dull red glow was on the waters of the lake that lay to the west of the valley. In the dim light of an hour later, when the hills of Thingvellir slept under the cloud shadow that was their only night, Stephen Orry stood with the Governor's daughter by the door of the Thingvellir parsonage, for Jorgen's company were the parson's guests. He held out the champion's belt to her and said, "Take it back, for if I keep it the man and his kinsmen will follow me all the days of my life."

She answered him that it was his, for he had won it, and until it was taken from him he must hold it, and if he stood in peril from the kinsmen of any man let him remember that it was she, daughter of the Governor himself, who had given it. The air was hushed in that still hour, not a twig or a blade rustling over the serried face of that desolate land as far as the wooded rifts that stood under the snowy dome of the Arman fells. As she spoke there was a sharp noise near at hand, and he started; but she rallied him on his fears, and laughed that one who had felled the blustering champion of that day should tremble at a noise in the night.

There was a wild outcry in Thingvellir next morning. Patricksen, the Westmann islander, had been murdered. There was a rush of the people to the place where his body had been found. It lay like a rag across the dike that ran between the parsonage and the church. On the dead man's face was the look that all had seen there when last night he flung down the belt between his adversary and the Governor's daughter, crying, "Keep it." But his sullen eyes were glazed, and stared up without the quivering of a lid through the rosy sunlight; the dark veins on his brow were now purple, and when they lifted him they saw that his back was broken.

Then there was a gathering at the foot of the Mount, with the parson for judge, and nine men of those who had slept in the tents nearest to the body for witnesses and jury. Nothing was discovered. No one had heard a sound throughout the night. There was no charge to put before the law-givers at Althing. The kinsmen of the dead man cast dark looks at Stephen Orry, but he gave

never a sign. Next day the strong man was laid under the shallow turf of the Church garth. His little life's swaggering was swaggered out; he must sleep on to the resurrection without one brag more.

The Governor's daughter did not leave the guest room of the parsonage from the night of the wrestling onward to the last morning of the Althing holiday, and then, the last ceremonies done, the tents struck and the ponies saddled, she took her place between Jorgen and the Count for the return journey home. Twenty paces behind her the fair-haired Stephen Orry rode on his shaggy pony, gaunt and peaky and bearded as a goat, and five paces behind him rode the brother of the dead man Patricksen. Amid five hundred men and women, and eight hundred horses saddled for riding or packed with burdens, these three had set their faces toward the little wooden capital.

July passed into August, and the day was near that had been appointed by Jorgen Jorgensen for the marriage of his daughter to the Count Trollop. At the girl's request the marriage was postponed. The second day came nigh; again the girl excused herself, and again the marriage was put off. A third time the appointed day approached, and a third time the girl asked for delay. But Jorgen's iron will was to be tampered with no longer. The time was near when the Minister must return to Copenhagen, and that was reason enough why the thing in hand should be despatched. The marriage must be delayed no longer.

But then the Count betrayed reluctance. Rumor had pestered him with reports that vexed his pride. He dropped hints of them to the Governor. "Strange," said he, "that a woman should prefer the stink of the fulmar fish to the perfumes of civilization." Jorgen fired up at the sneer. His daughter was his daughter, and he was Governor-General of the island. What low-born churl would dare to lift his eyes to the child of Jorgen Jorgensen?

The Count had his answer pat. He had made inquiries. The man's name was Stephen Orry. He came from Stappen under Snaefell, and was known there for a wastrel. On the poor glory of his village voyage as an athlete, he idled his days in bed and his nights at the tavern. His father, an honest thrall, was dead; his mother lived by splitting and drying the stock-fish for English traders. He was the foolish old woman's pride, and she kept him. Such was the man whom the daughter of the Governor had chosen before the Minister for Iceland.

At that Jorgen's hard face grew livid and white by turns. They were sitting at supper in Government House, and, with an oath, the

Governor brought his fist down on the table. It was a lie; his daughter knew no more of the man than he did. The Count shrugged his shoulders and asked where she was then, that she was not with them. Jorgen answered, with an absent look, that she was forced to keep her room.

At that moment a message came for the Count. It was urgent, and could not wait. The Count went to the door, and, returning presently, asked if Jorgen was sure that his daughter was in the house. Certain of it he was, for she was ill, and the days were deepening to winter. But for all his assurance, Jorgen sprang up from his seat and made for his daughter's chamber. She was not there, and the room was empty. The Count met him in the corridor. "Follow me," he whispered, and Jorgen followed, his proud, stern head bent low.

In the rear of the Government House at Reykjavik there is a small meadow. That night it was inches deep in the year's first fall of snow, but two persons stood together there, close locked in each other's arms—Stephen Orry and the daughter of Jorgen Jorgensen.

With the tread of a cat a man crept up behind them. It was the brother of Patricksen. At his back came the Count and the Governor. The snow cloud lifted, and a white gush of moonlight showed all. With the cry of a wild beast Jorgen flung himself between his daughter and her lover, leapt at Stephen and struck him hard on the breast, and then, as the girl dropped to her knees at his feet, he cursed her.

"Bastard," he shrieked, "there's no blood of mine in your body. Go to your filthy offal, and may the devil damn you both."

She stopped her ears to shut out the torrent of a father's curse, but before the flood of it was spent she fell backward cold and senseless, and her upturned face was whiter than the snow. Then her giant lover lifted her in his arms as if she had been a child, and strode away in silence.

CHAPTER II

THE MOTHER OF A MAN

The daughter of the Governor-General and the seaman of Stappen were made man and wife. The little Lutheran priest, who married them, Sigfus Thomson, a worthy man and a good Christian, had reason to remember the ceremony. Within a week he was removed from his chaplaincy at the capital to the rectory of

Grimsey, the smallest cure of the Icelandic Church, on an island separated from the mainland by seven Danish miles of sea.

The days that followed brought Rachel no cheer of life. She had thought that her husband would take her away to his home under Snaefell, and so remove her from the scene of her humiliation. He excused himself, saying that Stappen was but a poor place, where the great ships never put in to trade, and that there was more chance of livelihood at Reykjavik. Rachel crushed down her shame, and they took a mean little house in the fishing quarter. But Stephen did no work. Once he went out four days with a company of Englishmen as guide to the geysers, and on his return he idled four weeks on the wharves, looking at the foreign seamen as they arrived by the boats. The fame of his exploit at Thingvellir had brought him a troop of admirers, and what he wanted for his pleasure he never lacked. But necessity began to touch him at home, and then he hinted to Rachel that her father was rich. She had borne his indifference to her degradation, she had not murmured at the idleness that pinched them, but at that word something in her heart seemed to break. She bent her head and said nothing. He went on to hint that she should go to her father, who seeing her need would surely forgive her. Then her proud spirit could brook no more. "Rather than darken my father's doors again," she said, "I will starve on a crust of bread and a drop of water."

Things did not mend, and Stephen began to cast down his eyes in shame when Rachel looked at him. Never a word of blame she spoke, but he reproached himself and talked of his old mother at Stappen. She was the only one who could do any good with him. She knew him and did not spare him. When she was near he worked sometimes, and did not drink too much. He must send for her.

Rachel raised no obstacle, and one day the old mother came, perched upon a bony, ragged-eared pony, and with all her belongings on the pack behind her. She was a little hard-featured woman; and at the first sight of her seamed and blotched face Rachel's spirit sank.

The old woman was active and restless. Two days after her arrival she was at work at her old trade of splitting and drying the stock-fish. All the difference that the change had made for her was that she was working on the beach at Reykjavik instead of the beach at Stappen, and living with her son and her son's wife instead of alone.

Her coming did not better the condition of Rachel. She had measured her new daughter-in-law from head to foot at their

first meeting, and neither smiled nor kissed her. She was devoted to her son, and no woman was too good for him. Her son had loved her, and Rachel had come between them. The old woman made up her mind to hate the girl, because her fine manners and comely face were a daily rebuke to her own coarse habits and homely looks, and an hourly contrast always present to Stephen's eyes.

Stephen was as idle as ever, and less ashamed of his sloth now that there was some one to keep the wolf from the door. His mother accepted with cheerfulness the duty of bread-winner to her son, but Rachel's helplessness chafed her. For all her fine fingering the girl could finger nothing that would fill the pot. "A pretty wife you've brought me home to keep," she muttered morning and night.

But Rachel's abasement was not even yet at its worst. "Oh," she thought, "if I could but get back my husband to myself alone, he would see my humiliation and save me from it." She went a woman's way to work to have the old mother sent home to Stappen. But the trick that woman's wit can devise woman's wit can balk, and the old mother held her ground. Then the girl bethought her of her old shame at living in a hovel close to her father's house, and asked to be taken away. Anywhere, anywhere, let it be to the world's end, and she would follow. Stephen answered that one place was like another in Iceland, where the people were few and all knew their history; and, as for foreign parts, though a seaman he was not a seagoing man, farther than the whale-fishing lay about their coasts, and that, go where they might to better their condition, yet other poor men were there already. At that, Rachel's heart sank, for she saw that the great body of her husband must cover a pigmy soul. Bound she was for all her weary days to the place of her disgrace, doomed she was to live to the last with the woman who hated her, and to eat that woman's bitter bread. She was heavy with child at this time, and her spirit was broken. So she sat herself down with her feet to the hearth, and wept.

There the old mother saw her as often as she bustled in and out of the house from the beach, and many a gibe she flung her way. But Stephen sat beside her one day with a shamefaced look, and cursed his luck, and said if he only had an open boat of his own what he would do for both of them. She asked how much a boat would cost him, and he answered sixty kroner; that a Scotch captain then in the harbor had such a one to sell at that price, and that it was a better boat than the fishermen of those parts ever owned, for it was of English build. Now it chanced that sitting alone that very day in her hopelessness, Rachel had overheard a group of noisy

young girls in the street tell of a certain Jew, named Bernard Frank, who stood on the jetty by the stores buying hair of the young maidens who would sell to him, and of the great money he had paid to some of them, such as they had never handled before.

And now at this mention of the boat, and at the flash of hope that came with it, Rachel remembered that she herself had a plentiful head of hair, and how often it had been commended for its color and texture, and length and abundance, in the days (now gone forever) when all things were good and beautiful that belonged to the daughter of the Governor. So, making some excuse to Stephen, she rose up, put off her little house cap with the tassel, put on her large linen head-dress, hurried out, and made for the wharf.

There in truth the Jew was standing with a group of girls about him. And some of these would sell outright to him, and then go straightway to the stores to buy filigree jewelry and rings, or bright-hued shawls, with the price of their golden locks shorn off. And some would hover about him between desire of so much artificial adornment and dread of so much natural disfigurement, until, like moths, they would fall before the light of the Jew's bright silver.

Rachel had reached the place at the first impulse of her thought, but being there her heart misgave her, and she paused on the outskirts of the crowd. To go in among these girls and sell her hair to the Jew was to make herself one with the lowest and meanest of the town, but that was not the fear that held her back. Suddenly the thought had come to her that what she had intended to do was meant to win her husband back to her, yet that she could not say what it was that had won him for her at the first. And seeing how sadly the girls were changed after the shears had passed over their heads, she could not help but ask herself what it would profit her, though she got the boat for her husband, if she lost him for herself? And thinking in this fashion she was turning away with a faltering step, when the Jew, seeing her, called to her, saying what lovely fair hair she had, and asking would she part with it. There was no going back on her purpose then, so facing it out as bravely as she could, she removed her head-dress, dropped her hair out of the plaits, until it fell in its sunny wavelets to her waist, and asked how much he would give for it. The Jew answered, "Fifty kroner."

"Make it sixty," she said, "and it is yours."

The Jew protested that he would lose by the transaction, but he paid the money into Rachel's hands, and she, lest she should repent

of her bargain, prayed him to take her hair off instantly. He was nothing loth to do so, and the beautiful flaxen locks, cut close to the crown, fell in long tresses to his big shears. Rachel put back her linen head-dress, and, holding tightly the sixty silver pieces in her palm, hurried home.

Her cheeks were crimson, her eyes were wet, and her heart was beating high when she returned to her poor home in the fishing quarter. There in a shrill, tremulous voice of joy and fear, she told Stephen all, and counted out the glistening coins to the last of the sixty into his great hand.

"And now you can buy the English boat," she said, "and we shall be beholden to no one."

He answered her wild words with few of his own, and showed little pleasure; yet he closed his hand on the money, and, getting up, he went out of the house, saying he must see the Scotch captain there and then. Hardly had he gone when the old mother came in from her work on the beach, and, Rachel's hopes being high, she could not but share them with her, and so she told her all, little as was the commerce that passed between them. The mother only grunted as she listened and went on with her food.

Rachel longed for Stephen to return with the good news that all was settled and done, but the minutes passed and he did not come. The old woman sat by the hearth and smoked. Rachel waited with fear at her heart, but the hours went by and still Stephen did not appear. The old woman dozed before the fire and snored. At length, when the night had worn on toward midnight, an unsteady step came to the door, and Stephen reeled into the house drunk. The old woman awoke and laughed.

Rachel grew faint and sank to a seat. Stephen dropped to his knees on the ground before her, and in a maudlin cry went on to tell of how he had thought to make one hundred kroner of her sixty by a wager, how he had lost fifty, and then in a fit of despair had spent the other ten.

"Then all is gone—all," cried Rachel. And thereupon the old woman shuffled to her feet and said bitterly, "And a good thing, too. I know you—trust me for seeing through your sly ways, my lady. You expected to take my son from me with the price of your ginger hair, you ugly bald-pate."

Rachel's head grew light, and with the cry of a baited creature she turned upon the old mother in a torrent of hot words. "You low, mean, selfish soul," she cried, "I despise you more than the dirt under my feet."

Worse than this she said, and the old woman called on Stephen

to hearken to her, for that was the wife he had brought home to revile his mother.

The old witch shed some crocodile tears, and Stephen lunged in between the women and with the back of his hand struck his wife across the face.

At that blow Rachel was silent for a moment, trembling like an affrighted beast, and then she turned upon her husband. "And so you have struck me—me—me," she cried. "Have you forgotten the death of Patricksen?"

The blow of her words was harder than the blow of her husband's hand. The man reeled before it, turned white, gasped for breath, then caught up his cap and fled out into the night.

CHAPTER III

THE LAD JASON

Of Rachel in her dishonor there is now not much to tell, but the little that is left is the kernel of this history.

That night, amid the strain of strong emotions, she was brought to bed before her time was yet full. Her labor was hard, and long she lay between life and death, for the angel of hope did not pull with her. But as the sun shot its first yellow rays through the little skin-covered windows, a child was born to Rachel, and it was a boy. Little joy she found in it, and remembering its father's inhumanity, she turned her face from it to the wall, trying thereby to conquer the yearning that answered to its cry.

It was then that for the first time since her lying-in that the old mother came to her. She had been out searching for Stephen, and had just come upon news of him.

"He has gone in an Engish ship," she cried. "He sailed last night, and I have lost him forever."

And at that she leaned her quivering white face over the bed, and raised her clenched hand over Rachel's face.

"Son for son," she cried again. "May you lose your son, even as you have made me to lose mine."

The child seemed likely to answer to the impious prayer, for its little strength waned visibly. And in those first hours of her shameful widowhood the evil thought came to Rachel to do with it as the baser sort among her people were allowed to do with the children they did not wish to rear—expose it to its death before it had yet touched food. But in the throes, as she thought, of its ex-

tremity, the love of the mother prevailed over the hate of the wife, and with a gush of tears she plucked the babe to her breast. Then the neighbor, who out of pity and charity had nursed her in her dark hour, ran for the priest, that with the blessing of baptism the child might die a Christian soul.

The good man came, and took the little, sleep-bound body from Rachel's arms, and asked her the name. She did not answer, and he asked again. Once more, having no reply, he turned to the neighbor to know what the father's name had been.

"Stephen Orry," said the good woman.

"Then Stephen Stephenson," he began, dipping his fingers into the water; but at the sound of that name Rachel cried, "No, no, no."

"He has not done well by her, poor soul," whispered the woman; "call it after her own father."

"Then Jorgen Jorgensen," the priest began again; and again Rachel cried, "No, no, no," and raised herself upon her arm.

"It has no father," she said, "and I have none. If it is to die, let it go to God's throne with the badge of no man's cruelty; and if it is to live, let it be known by no man's name save its own. Call it Jason—Jason only."

And in the name of Jason the child was baptized, and so it was that Rachel, little knowing what she was doing in her blind passion and pain, severed her son from kith and kin. But in what she did out of bitterness of her heart God himself had his own great purposes.

From that hour the child increased in strength, and soon waxed strong, and three days after, as the babe lay cooing at Rachel's breast, and she in her own despite was tasting the first sweet joys of motherhood, the old mother of Stephen came to her again.

"This is my house," she said, "and I will keep shelter over your head no longer. You must pack and away—you and your brat, both of you."

That night the Bishop of the island—Bishop Petersen, once a friend of Rachel's mother, now much in fear of the Governor, her father—came to her in secret to say that there was a house for her at the extreme west of the fishing quarter, where a fisherman had lately died, leaving the little that he had to the Church. There she betook herself with her child as soon as the days of her lying-in were over. It was a little oblong shed of lava blocks laid with peat for mortar, resembling on the outside two ancient seamen shoving shoulders together against the weather and on the inside two tiny bird cages.

And having no one now to stand to her, or seem to stand, in the place of bread-winner, she set herself to such poor work as she could do and earn a scanty living by. This was cleaning the down of the eider duck, by passing it through a sieve made of yarn stretched over a hoop. By a deft hand, with extreme labor, something equal to sixpence a day could be made in this way from the English traders. With such earnings Rachel lived in content, and if Jorgen Jorgensen had any knowledge of his daughter's necessities he made no effort to relieve them.

Her child lived—a happy, sprightly, joyous bird in its little cage—and her broken heart danced to its delicious accents. It sweetened her labors, it softened her misfortunes, it made life more dear and death more dreadful; it was the strength of her arms and the courage of her soul, her summons to labor and her desire for rest. Call her wretched no longer, for now she had her child to love. Happy little dingy cabin in the fishing quarter, amid the vats for sharks' oil and the heaps of dried cod! It was filled with heaven's own light, that came from above but radiated from the little cradle where her life, her hope, her joy, her solace lay swathed in the coverlet of all her love.

And as she worked through the long summer days on the beach, with the child playing among the pebbles at her feet, many a dream danced before her of the days to come, when her boy would sail in the ships that came to their coast, and perhaps take her with him to that island of the sea that had been her mother's English home, where men were good to women and women were true to men. Until then she must live where she was, a prisoner chained to a cruel rock; but she would not repine, she could wait, for the time of her deliverance was near. Her liberator was coming. He was at her feet; he was her child, her boy, her darling; and when he slumbered she saw him wax and grow, and when he awoke she saw her fetters break. Thus on the bridge of hope's own rainbow she spanned her little world of shame and pain.

The years went by, and Jason grew to be a strong-limbed, straight, stalwart lad, red-haired and passionate-hearted, reckless and improvident as far as improvidence was possible amid the conditions of his bringing up. He was a human waterfowl, and all his days were spent on the sea. Such work as was also play he was eager to do. He would clamber up the rocks of the island of Engy outside the harbor, to take the eggs of the eider duck from the steep places where she built her nest; and from the beginning of May to the end of June he found his mother in the eider down that she cleaned for the English traders. People whispered to

Rachel that he favored his father, both in stature and character, but she turned a deaf ear to their gloomy forebodings. Her son was as fair as the day to look upon, and if he had his lazy humors, he had also one quality which overtopped them all—he loved his mother. People whispered again that in this regard also he resembled his father, who amid many vices had the same sole virtue.

Partly to shut him off from the scandal of the gossips, who might tell him too soon the story of his mother's wrecked and broken life, and partly out of the bitterness and selfishness of her bruised spirit, Rachel had brought up her boy to speak the tongue of her mother—the English tongue. Her purpose failed her, for Jason learned Icelandic on the beach as fast as English in the house; he heard the story of his mother's shame and of his father's baseness, and brought it back to her in the colors of a thrice-told tale. Vain effort of fear and pride! It was nevertheless to prepare the lad for the future that was before him.

And through all the days of her worse than widowhood, amid dark memories of the past and thoughts of the future wherein many passions struggled together, the hope lay low down in Rachel's mind that Stephen would return to her. Could he continue to stand in dread of the threat of his own wife? No, no, no. It had been only the hot word of a moment of anger, and it was gone. Stephen was staying away in fear of the brother of Patricksen. When that man was dead, or out of the way, he would return. Then he would see their boy, and remember his duty toward him, and if the lad ever again spoke bitterly of one whom he had never yet seen, she on her part would chide him, and the light of revenge that had sometimes flashed in his brilliant blue eyes would fade away and in uplooking and affection he would walk as a son with his father's hand.

Thus in the riot of her woman's heart hope fought with fear and love with hate. And at last the brother of Patricksen did indeed disappear. Rumor whispered that he had returned to the Westmann islands, there to settle for the rest of his days and travel the sea no more.

"Now *he* will come," thought Rachel. "Wherever he is, he will learn that there is no longer anything to fear, and he will return."

And she waited with as firm a hope that the winds would carry the word as Noah waited for the settling of the waters after the dove had found the dry land.

But time went on and Stephen did not appear, and at length

under the turmoil of a heart that fought with itself, Rachel's health began to sink.

Then Patricksen returned. He had a message for her. He knew where her husband was. Stephen Orry was on the little island of Man, far away south, in the Irish Sea. He had married again, and he had another child. His wife was dead, but his son was living.

Rachel in her weakness went to bed and rose from it no more. The broad dazzle of the sun that had been so soon to rise on her wasted life was shot over with an inky pall of cloud. Nor for her was to be the voyage to England. Her boy must go alone.

It was the winter season in that stern land of the north, when night and day so closely commingle that the darkness seems never to lift. And in the silence of that long night Rachel lay in her little hut, sinking rapidly and much alone. Jason came to her from time to time, in his great sea stockings and big gloves and with the odor of the brine in his long red hair. By her bedside he would stand half-an-hour in silence, with eyes full of wonderment; for life like that of an untamed colt was in his own warm limbs, and death was very strange to him. A sudden hemorrhage brought the end, and one day darker than the rest, when Jason hastened home from the boats, the pain and panting of death was there before him. His mother's pallid face lay on her arm, her great dark eyes were glazed already, she was breathing hard and every breath was a spasm. Jason ran for the priest—the same that had named him in his baptism. The good old man came hobbling along, book in hand, and seeing how life flickered he would have sent for the Governor, but Rachel forbade him. He read to her, he sang for her in his crazy cracked voice, he shrived her, and then all being over, as far as human efforts could avail, he sat himself down on a chest, spread his print handkerchief over his knee, took out his snuff-box, and waited.

Jason stood with his back to the glow of the peat fire, and his hard set face in the gloom. Never a word came from him, never a sign, never a tear. Only with the strange light in his wild eyes he looked on and listened.

Rachel stirred and called to him.

"Are you there, Jason?" she said, feebly, and he stepped to her side.

"Closer," she whispered; and he took her cold hand in both his hands, and then her dim eyes knew where to look for his face.

"Good-by, my brave lad," she said. "I do not fear to leave you. You are strong, you are brave, and the world is kind to them that

can fight it. Only to the weak it is cruel—only to the weak and the timid—only to women—only to helpless women sold into the slavery of heartless men."

And then she told him everything—her love, her loyalty, her life. In twenty little words she told the story.

"I gave him all—all. I took a father's curse for him. He struck me—he left me—he forgot me with another woman. Listen—listen—closer still—still closer," she whispered, eagerly, and then she spoke the words that lie at the heart of this history.

"You will be a sailor, and sail to many lands. If you should ever meet your father, remember what your mother has borne from him. If you should never meet him, but should meet his son, remember what your mother has suffered at the hands of his father. Can you hear me? Is my speech too thick? Have you understood me?"

Jason's parched throat was choking, and he did not answer.

"My brave boy, farewell," she said. "Good-by," she murmured again, more faintly, and after that there was a lull, a pause, a sigh, a long-drawn breath, another sigh, and then over his big brown hands her pallid face fell forward, and the end was come.

For some minutes Jason stood there still in the same impassive silence. Never a tear yet in his great eyes, now wilder than they were; never a cry from his dry throat, now surging hot and athirst; never a sound in his ears, save a dull hum of words like the plash of a breaker that was coming—coming—coming from afar. She was gone who had been everything to him. She had sunk like a wave, and the waves of the ocean were pressing on behind her. She was lost, and the tides of life were flowing as before.

The old pastor shuffled to his feet, mopping his moist eyes with his red handkerchief. "Come away, my son," he said, and tapped Jason on the shoulder.

"Not yet," the lad answered hoarsely. And then he turned with a dazed look and said, like one who speaks in his sleep, "My father has killed my mother."

"No, no, don't say that," said the priest.

"Yes, yes," said the lad more loudly; "not in a day, or an hour, or a moment, but in twenty long years."

"Hush, hush, my son," the old priest murmured.

But Jason did not hear him. "Now listen," he cried, "and hear my vow." And still he held the cold hand in his hands, and still the ashy face rested on them.

"I will hunt the world over until I find that man, and when I have found him I will slay him."

"What are you saying?" cried the priest.

But Jason went on with an awful solemnity. "If he should die, and we should never meet, I will hunt the world over until I find his son, and when I have found him I will kill him for his father's sake."

"Silence, silence," cried the priest.

"So help me God!" said Jason.

"My son, my son, Vengeance is His. What are we that we should presume to it?"

Jason heard nothing, but the frost of life's first winter that had bound up his heart, deafening him, blinding him, choking him, seemed all at once to break. He pushed the cold face gently back on to the pillow, and fell over it with sobs that shook the bed.

They buried the daughter of the Governor in the acre allotted to the dead poor in the yard of the Cathedral of Reykjavik. The bells were ringing a choral peal between matins and morning service. Happy little girls in bright new gowns, with primroses on their breasts yellowing their round chins, went skipping in at the wide west doorway, chattering as they went like linnets in spring. It was Easter Day, nineteen years after Stephen Orry had fled from Iceland.

Next morning Jason signed articles on the wharf to sail as seaman before the mast on an Irish schooner homeward bound for Belfast, with liberty to call at Whitehaven in Cumberland, and Ramsey in the Isle of Man.

CHAPTER IV

AN ANGEL IN HOMESPUN

The little island in the middle of the Irish Sea has through many centuries had its own language and laws, and its own judges and governors. Very, very long ago, it had also its own kings; and one of the greatest of them was the Icelandic seadog who bought it with blood in 1077. More recently it has had its own reigning lords, and one of the least of them was the Scottish nobleman who sold it for gold in 1765. After that act of truck and trade the English crown held the right of appointing the Governor-General. It chose the son of the Scottish nobleman. This was John, fourth Duke of Athol, and he held his office fifty-five bad years. In his day the island was not a scene of overmuch gaiety. If the memory of old men can be trusted, he contrived to keep a swash-

buckler court there, but its festivities, like his own dignities, must have been maimed and lame. He did not care to see too much of it, and that he might be free to go where he would he appointed a deputy governor.

Now when he looked about him for this deputy he found just six and twenty persons ready to fall at his feet. He might have had either of the Deemsters, but he selected neither; he might have had any of the twenty-four Keys, but he selected none. It was then that he heard of a plain farmer in the north of the island, who was honored for his uprightness, beloved for his simplicity, and revered for his piety. "The very man for me," thought the lord of the swashbucklers, and he straightway set off to see him.

He found him living like a patriarch among his people, surrounded by his sons, and proud of them that they were many and strong. His name was Adam Fairbrother. In his youth he had run away to sea, been taken prisoner by the Algerines, kept twenty-eight months a slave in Barbary, had escaped and returned home captain of a Guineaman. This had been all his education and all his history. He had left the island a wild, headstrong, passionate lad: he had returned to it a sober, patient, gentle-hearted man.

Adam's house was at Lague, a loose, straggling, featureless and irresolute old fabric, on five hundred hungry acres of the rocky headland of Maughold. When the Duke rode up to it Adam himself was ringing the bell above the door lintel that summoned his people to dinner. He was then in middle life, stout, yet flaccid and slack, with eyes and forehead of sweetest benevolence, mouth of softest tenderness, and hair already whitening over his ears and temples.

"The face of an angel in homespun," thought the Duke.

Adam received his visitor with the easy courtesy of an equal, first offering his hand. The Duke shook hands with him. He held the stirrup while the Duke alighted, took the horse to the stable, slackened its girths, and gave it a feed of oats, talking all the time. The Duke stepped after him and listened. Then he led the way to the house. The Duke followed. They went into the living room—an oblong kitchen with an oak table down the middle, and two rows of benches from end to end. The farming people were trooping in, bringing with them the odor of fresh peat and soil. Bowls of barley broth were being set in front of the big chair at the table end. Adam sat in this seat and motioned the Duke to the bench at his right. The Duke sat down. Then six words of grace and all were in their places—Adam himself, his wife, a shrewd-faced body, his six sons, big and shambling, his men, bare-armed and quiet, his maids, with skirts tucked up, plump and noisy, and

the swashbuckler Duke, amused and silent, glancing down the long lines of the strangest company with whom he had ever yet been asked to sit at dinner. Suet pudding followed the broth, sheep's head and potatoes followed the pudding, then six words of thanks and all rose and trooped away except the Duke and Adam. That good man had not altered the habit of his life by so much as a plate of cheese for the fact that the "Lord of Man" had sat at meat with him. "The manners of a prince," thought the Duke.

They took the armchairs at opposite sides of the ingle.

"You look cozy in your retreat, Mr. Fairbrother," said the Duke; "but since your days in Guinea have you never dreamt of a position of more power, and perhaps of more profit?"

"As for power," answered Adam, "I have observed that the name and the reality rarely go together."

"The experience of a statesman," thought the Duke.

"As for profit," he continued, "I have reflected that money has never yet since the world began tempted a happy man."

"The wisdom of a judge," thought the Duke.

"And as for myself I am a completely happy one."

"With more than a judge's integrity," thought the Duke. At that the Duke told the purpose of his visit.

"And now," he said, with uplifted hands, "don't say I've gone far to fare worse. The post I offer requires but one qualification in the man who fills it, yet no one about me possesses the simple gift. It needs an honest man, and all the better if he's not a fool. Will you take it?"

"No," said Adam, short and blunt.

"The very man," thought the Duke.

Six months later the Duke had his way. Adam Fairbrother, of Lague, was made Governor of Man (under the Duke himself as Governor-General) at a salary of five hundred pounds a year.

On the night of Midsummer Day, 1793, the town of Ramsey held high festival. The "Royal George" had dropped anchor in the bay, and the Prince of Wales, attended by the Duke of Athol, Captain Murray, and Captain Cook, had come ashore to set the foot of an English Prince for the first time on Manx soil. Before dusk, the Royal ship had weighed anchor again, but when night fell in the festivities had only begun. Guns were fired, bands of music passed through the town, and bonfires were lighted on the top of the Sky Hill. The kitchens of the inns were crowded, and the streets were thronged with country people enveloped in dust. In the market-place the girls were romping, the young men drink-

ing, the children shouting at the top of their voices, the pedlers edging their barrows through the crowd and crying their wares. Over all the tumult of exuberant voices, the shouting, the laughter, the merry shrieks, the gay banter, the barking of sheep-dogs, the snarling of mongrel setters, the streaming and smoking of hawkers' torches across a thousand faces, there was the steady peal of the bell of Ballure.

In the midst of it all a strange man passed through the town. He was of colossal stature—stalwart, straight, and flaxen-haired, wearing a goatskin cap without brim, a gray woolen shirt open at the neck and belted with a leathern strap, breeches of untanned leather, long thick stockings, a second pair up to his ankles, and no shoes on his feet. His face was pale, his cheek bones stood high, and his eyes were like the eyes of a cormorant. The pretty girls stopped their chatter to look after him, but he strode on with long steps, and the people fell aside for him.

At the door of the Saddle Inn he stood a moment, but voices came from within and he passed on. Going by the Court House he came to the Plow Tavern, and there he stopped again, paused a moment, and then stepped in. After a time the children who had followed at his heels separated, and the girls who had looked after him began to dance with arms akimbo and skirts held up over their white ankles. He was forgotten.

An hour later, four men, armed with cutlasses, and carrying ship's irons, came hurrying from the harbor. They were blue-jackets from the revenue cutter lying in the bay, and they were in pursuit of a seaman who had escaped from the English brig at anchor outside. The runaway was a giant and a foreigner, and could not speak a word of English or Manx. Had any one seen him? Yes, every one. He had gone into the Plow. To the Plow the blue-jackets made their way. The good woman who kept it, Mother Beatty, had certainly seen such a man. "Aw, yes, the poor craythur, he came, so he did," but never a word could he speak to her, and never a word could she speak to him, so she gave him a bit of barley cake, and maybe a drop of something, and that was all. He was not in the house then? "Och, let them look for themselves." The blue-jackets searched the house, and came out as they had entered. Then they passed through every street, looked down every alley, peered into every archway, and went back to their ship empty-handed.

When they were gone Mother Beatty came to the door and looked out. At the next instant the big-limbed stranger stepped from behind her.

"That way," she whispered, and pointed to a dark alley opposite.

The man watched the direction of her finger in the darkness, doffed his cap, and strode away.

The alley led him by many a turn to the foot of a hill. It was Ballure. Behind him lay the town, with the throngs, the voices, and the bands of music. To his left was the fort, belching smoke and the roar of cannon. To his right were the bonfires on the hilltop, with little dark figures passing before them, and a glow above them embracing a third of the sky. In front of him was the gloom and silence of the country. He walked on; a fresh coolness came to him out of the darkness, and over him a dull murmur hovered in the air. He was going toward Kirk Maughold.

He passed two or three little houses by the wayside, but most of them were dark. He came by a tavern, but the door was shut, and no one answered when he knocked. At length, by the turn of a byroad, he saw a light through the trees, and making toward it he found a long shambling house under a clump of elms. He was at Lague.

The light he saw was from one window only, and he stepped up to it. A man was sitting alone by the hearth, with the glow of a gentle fire on his face—a beautiful face, soft and sweet and tender. It was Adam Fairbrother.

The stranger stood a moment in the darkness, looking into the quiet room. Then he tapped on the window-pane.

On this evening Governor Fairbrother was worn with toil and excitement. It had been Tynwald Day, and while sitting at St. John's he had been summoned to Ramsey to receive the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Athol. The royal party had already landed when he arrived, but not a word of apology had he offered for the delayed reception. He had taken the Prince to the top of the Sky Hill, talking as he went, answering many questions and asking not a few, naming the mountains, running through the island's history, explaining the three legs of its coat-of-arms, glancing at its ancient customs and giving a taste of its language. He had been simple, sincere, and natural from first to last, and when the time had come for the Prince to return to his ship he had presented his six sons to him with the quiet dignity of a patriarch, saying these were his gifts to his king that was to be. Then on the quay he had offered the Prince his hand, hoping he might see him again before long; for he was a great lover of a happy face, and the Prince, it was plain to see, was, like himself, a man of a cheerful spirit.

But when the "Royal George" had sailed out of the bay at the top of the tide, and the great folk who had held their breath in awe of so much majesty were preparing to celebrate the visit with the blazing of cannon and the beating of drums, Adam Fairbrother had silently slipped away. He lived at Government House, but had left his three elder boys at Lague, and thought this a happy chance of spending a night at home. Only his sons' housekeeper, a spinster aunt of his own, was there, and when she had given him a bite of supper he had sent her after the others to look at the sights of Ramsey. Then he had drawn up his chair before the fire, charged his long pipe, purred a song to himself, begun to smoke, to doze, and to dream.

His dreams that night had been woven with visions of his bad days in the slave factory at Barbary—of his wreck and capture, of his cruel tortures before his neck was yet bowed to the yoke of bondage, of the whip, before he knew the language of his masters to obey it quickly, of the fetters on his hands, the weights on his legs, the collar about his neck, of the raw flesh where the iron had torn the skin; and then of the dark wild night of his escape when he and three others, as luckless and as miserable, had run a raft into the sea, stripped off their shirts for a sail, and thrust their naked bodies together to keep them warm.

Such was the gray silt that came up to him that night from the deposits of his memory. The Tynwalk, the Prince, the Duke, the guns, the music, the bonfires, were gone; bit by bit he pieced together the life he had lived in his youth, and at the thought of it, and that it was now over, he threw back his head and gave thanks where they were due.

At that moment he heard a tap at the window-pane, and turning about he saw a man's haggard face peering in at him from the darkness. Then he rose instantly, and threw open the door of the porch.

"Come in," he called.

The man entered.

He took one step into the house and stopped, seemed for a moment puzzled, dazed, sleepless, and then by a sudden impulse stepped quietly forward, pulled up the sleeve of his shirt and held out his arm. Around his wrist there was a circular abrasure where the loop of a fetter had worn away the skin, leaving the naked flesh raw and red.

He had been in irons.

With a word of welcome the Governor motioned the man to a seat. Some inarticulate sounds the man made and waved his hand.

He was a foreigner. What was his craft?

A tiny model of a full-rigged ship stood on the top of a corner cupboard. Adam pointed to it, and the man gave a quick nod of assent.

He was a seaman. Of what country?

"Shetlands?" asked the Governor.

The man shook his head.

"Sweden? Norway?—"

"Issland," said the man.

He was an Icelander.

Two rude portraits hung on the walls, one of a fair boy, the other of a woman in the early bloom of womanhood—Adam's young wife and first child. The Governor pointed to the boy, and the man shook his head.

He had no family.

The Governor pointed to the woman, and the man hesitated, seemed about to assent, and then, with the look of one who tries to banish an unwelcome thought, shook his head again.

He had no wife. What was his name?

The Governor took down from a shelf a Bible covered in green cloth, and opened at the writing on the fly-leaf between the Old and New Testaments. The writing ran:—"Adam Fairbrother, son of Jo: Fairbrother, and Mar: his wife, was born August the 11th, 1753, about 5 o'clock in the morning, half flood, wind at south-west, and christened August 18." To this he pointed, then to himself, and finally to the stranger. An abrupt change came over the man's manner. He grew sullen and gave no sign. But his eyes wandered with a fierce eagerness to the table, where the remains of the Governor's supper were still lying.

Adam drew up a chair and motioned the stranger to sit and eat. The man ate with frightful voracity, the perspiration breaking out in beads over his face. Having eaten, he grew drowsy, fell to nodding where he sat, and in a moment of recovered consciousness pointed to the stuffed head of a horse that hung over the door. He wished to sleep in the stable.

The Governor lit a lantern and led the way to the stable loft. There the man stretched himself on the straw, and soon his long and measured breathing told that he slept.

Hardly had the Governor got back to the house when his boys, his men, and the maids returned from Ramsey. Very full they all were of the doings of the day, and Adam, who never asked that son or servant of his should abridge the flow of talk for his presence, sat with his face to the fire and smoked, dozed, dreamt or thought,

and left his people to gossip on. What chance had brought the poor man to his door that night? An Icelander, dumb for all uses of speech, who had lain in the chains of some tyrant captain—a lone man, a seaman without wife or child in his own country, and a fugitive, a runaway, a hunted dog in this one! What angel of pleading had that very night been busy in his own memory with the story of his similar sufferings?

All at once his ear was arrested by what was being said behind him. The talk was of a sailor who had passed through the town, and of the blue-jackets who were in pursuit of him. He had stolen something. No, he had murdered somebody. Anyway there was a warrant for his arrest, for the High Bailiff had drawn it. An ill-looking fellow, but he would be caught yet, thank goodness, in God's good time.

The Governor twisted about, and asked what the sailor was like, and his boys answered him that he was a foreigneering sort of a man in a skin cap and long stockings, and bigger by half a head than Billy-by-Nite.

Just then there was the tramp of feet on the gravel outside and a loud rap at the door. Four men entered. They were the blue-jackets. The foreign seaman that they were in search of had been seen creeping up Ballure, and turning down toward Lague. Had he been there?

At that one of the boys, saying that his father had been at home all evening, turned to the Governor and repeated the question. But the good Adam had twisted back to the fire, and with the shank of his pipe hanging loosely from his lips, was now snoring heavily."

"His Excellency is asleep," said the blue-jacket.

No, no; that could not be, for he had been talking as they entered. "Father," cried the lad, and pushed him.

Then the Governor opened his eyes, and yawned heavily. The blue-jacket, cap in hand, told his story again, and the good Adam seemed to struggle hard in the effort to grasp it through the mists of sleep. At length he said, "What has the man done?"

"Deserted his ship, your Excellency."

"Nothing else—no crime?"

"Nothing else, your Excellency. Has he been here?"

"No," said the Governor.

And at that the weary man shut his eyes again and began to breathe most audibly. But when the blue-jackets, taking counsel together, concluded that somewhere thereabout the man must surely be, and decided to sleep the night in the stable loft, that they might

scour the country in the morning, the Governor awoke suddenly, saying he had no beds to offer them, but they might sleep on the benches of the kitchen.

An hour later, when all Lague was asleep, Adam rose from his bed, took a dark lantern and went back to the stable loft, aroused the Icelander, and motioned him to follow. They crossed the paved courtyard and came in front of the window. Adam pointed and the man looked in. The four blue-jackets were lying on the benches drawn round the fire, and the dull glow of the slumbering peat was on their faces. They were asleep. At that sight the man's eyes flashed, his mouth set hard, the muscles of his cheeks contracted, and with a hoarse cry in his throat, he fumbled the haft of the seaman's knife that hung in his belt and made one step forward.

But Adam, laying hold of his arm, looked into his eyes steadfastly, and in the light of the lantern their wild glance fell before him. At the next instant the man was gone.

The night was now far spent. In the town the forts were silent, the streets quiet, the market-place vacant, and on the hilltops the fires had smoldered down. By daybreak next morning the blue-jackets had gone back empty-handed to Ramsey, and by sunrise the English brig had sailed out of the bay.

Two beautiful creeks lie to the south of Ramsey and north of Maughold Head. One is called Lague, the other Port-y-Vullin. On the shore of Port-y-Vullin there is a hut built of peat and thatched with broom—dark, damp, boggy, and ruinous, a ditch where the tenant is allowed to sit rent free. The sun stood high when a woman, coming out of this place, found a man sleeping in a broken-ribbed boat that lay side down on the beach. She awakened him, and asked him into her hut. He rose to his feet and followed her. Last night he had been turned out of the best house in the island; this morning he was about to be received into the worst.

The woman was Liza Killey—the slut, the trollop, the trull, the slattern and drab of the island.

The man was Stephen Orry.

CHAPTER V

LITTLE SUNLOCKS

One month only had then passed since the night of Stephen Orry's flight from Iceland, and the story of his fortunes in the meantime is quickly told. In shame of his brutal blow, as well as fear of his wife's threat, he had stowed away in the hold of an English ship that sailed the same night. Two days later famine had brought him out of his hiding place, and he had been compelled to work before the mast. In ten more days he had signed articles as able seaman at the first English port of call. Then had followed punishments for sloth, punishments for ignorance, and punishments for not knowing the high-flavored language of his boatswain. After that had come bickerings, threats, scowls, oaths, and open ruptures with this chief of petty tyrants, ending with the blow of a marlin-spike over the big Icelander's crown, and the little boatswain rolling headlong overboard. Then had followed twenty-eight days spent in irons, riveted to the ship's side on the under deck, with bread and water diet every second day and nothing between. Finally, by the secret good fellowship of a shipmate with some bowels of compassion, escape had come after starvation, as starvation had come after slavery, and Stephen had swum ashore while his ship lay at anchor in Ramsey Bay.

What occurred thereafter at the house whereto he had drifted no one could rightly tell. He continued to live there with the trull who kept it. She had been the illegitimate child of an insolvent English debtor and the daughter of a neighboring vicar, had been ignored by her father, put out to nurse by her mother, bred in ignorance, reared in impurity, and had grown into a buxom hussy. By what arts, what hints, what appeals, what allurements, this trollop got possession of Stephen Orry it is not hard to guess. First, he was a hunted man, and only one who dare do anything dare open doors to him. Next, he was a foreigner, dumb for speech, and deaf for scandal, and therefore unable to learn more than his eyes could tell him of the woman who had given him shelter. Then the big Icelander was a handsome fellow; and the veriest drab that ever trailed a petticoat knows how to hide her slatternly habits while she is hankering after a fine-grown man. So the end of many conspiring circumstances was that after much

gossip in corners, many jeers, and some tossings of female heads, the vicar of the parish, Parson Gell, called one day at the hut in Port-y-Vullin, and on the following Sunday morning, at church, little Robbie Christian, the clerk and sexton, read out the askings for the marriage of Liza Killey, spinster, of the parish of Maughold, and Stephen Orry, bachelor, out of Iceland.

What a wedding it was that came three weeks later! Liza wore a gay new gown that had been lent her by a neighbor, Bella Coobragh, a girl who had meant to be married in it herself the year before, but had not fully carried out her moral intention and had since borne a child. Wearing such borrowed plumes and a brazen smile of defiance, Liza strutted up to the Communion rail, looking impudently into the men's faces, and saucily into the women's—for the church was thronged with an odorous mob that kept up the jabbering of frogs at spawn—and Stephen Orry slouched after her in his blowzy garments with a downward, shamefaced, nervous look that his hulky manners could not conceal.

Then what a wedding feast it was that followed! The little cabin in Port-y-Vullin reeked and smoked with men and women, and ran out on to the sand and pebbles of the beach, for the time of year was spring and the day was clear and warm. Liza's old lovers were there in troops. With a keg of rum over his shoulder Nary Crowe, the innkeeper, had come down from the "Hibernian" to give her joy, and Cleave Kinley, the butcher, had brought her up half a lamb from Ballaglass, and Matt Mylechreest, the net maker —a venal old skinflint—had charged his big snuff horn to the brim for the many noses of the guests. On the table, the form, the three-legged stool, the bed, and the hearth, they sat together cheek by jowl, their hats hung on the roof rafters, their plates perched on their knees.

And loud was their laughter and dubious their talk. Old Thurstan Coobragh led off on the advantages of marriage, saying it was middlin' plain that the gels nowadays must be wedded when they were babies in arms, for bye-childers were common, and a gel's father didn't care in a general way to look like a fool; but Nary Crowe saw no harm in a bit of sweetheartin,' and Cleave Kinley said no, of course, not if a man wasn't puttin' notions into a gel's head, and Matt Mylechreest, for his part, thought the gels were amazin' like the ghosts, for they got into every skeleton closet about the house.

"But then," said Matt, "I'm an ould bachelor, as the sayin' is, and don't know nothin.'"

"Ha, ha, ha! of course not," laughed the others; and then there was a taste of a toast to Liza's future in Nary's rum.

"Drop it," said Liza, as Nary, lifting his cup, leaned over to whisper.

"So I will, but it'll be into your ear, woman," said Nary. "So here's to the king that's comin.'"

By this time Stephen had slipped out of the noisome place, and was rambling on the quiet shore alone, with head bent, cheeks ashy pale, eyes fixed, and his brawny hands thrust deep into his pockets. At last, through the dense fumes within the house, Bella Coobragh noted Stephen's absence, and "Where's your man?" she said to Liza, with tantalizing light in her eyes.

"Maybe where yours is, Bella," said Liza, with a toss of the head; "near enough, perhaps, but not visible to the naked eye."

The effects of going to church on Liza Killey were what they often are of a woman of base nature. With a man to work for her she became more idle than before, and with nothing to fear from scandal more reckless and sluttish. Having hidden her nakedness in the gown of marriage, she lost the last rag of womanly shame.

The effects on Stephen Orry were the deepening of his sloth, his gloom and his helplessness. What purpose in life he ever had was paralyzed. On his first coming to the island he had sailed to the mackerel fishing in the boats of Kane Wade—a shrewd Manxman, who found the big, dumb Icelander a skilful fisherman. Now he neglected his work, lost self-reliance, and lay about for hours, neither thinking nor feeling, but with a look of sheer stupidity. And so the two sat together in their ditch, sinking day by day deeper and yet deeper into the mire of idleness, moroseness, and mutual loathing. Nevertheless, they had their cheerful hours together.

The "king'" of Nary's toast soon came. A child was born—a bonny, sunny boy as ever yet drew breath; but Liza looked on it as a check to her freedom, a drain on her energy, something helpless and looking to her for succor. So the unnatural mother neglected it, and Stephen, who was reminded by its coming that Rachel had been about to give birth to a child, turned his heart from it and ignored it.

Thus three spirit-breaking years dragged on, and Stephen Orry grew wo-begone and stone-eyed. Of old he had been slothful and spiritless indeed, but not a base man. Now his whole nature was all but gone to the gutter. He had once been a truth-teller, but living with a woman who assumed that he must be a liar, he

had ended by becoming one. He had no company save her company, for his slow wit had found it hard to learn the English tongue, and she alone could rightly follow him; he had no desires save the petty ones of daily food and drink; he had no purpose save the degrading purpose of defeating the nightly wanderings of his drunken wife. Thus without any human eye upon him in the dark way he was going, Stephen Orry had grown coarse and base.

But the end was not yet, of all this man was to be and know. One night, after spending the day on the sea with the lines for cod, the year deepening to winter, the air muggy and cold, he went away home, hungry, and wet, and cold, leaving his mates at the door of the "Plow," where there was good company within and the cheer of a busy fire! Home! On reaching Port-y-Vullin he found the door open, the hearth cold, the floor in a puddle from the driving rain, not a bite or sup in the cupboard, and his wife lying drunk across the bed, with the child in its grimy blueness creeping and crying about her head.

It was the beginning of the end. Once again he fumbled the haft of his seaman's knife, and then by a quick impulse he plucked up the child in his arms.

"Now God be praised for your poor face," he said, and while he dried the child's pitiful eyes, the hot drops started to his own.

He lit the fire, he cooked a cod he had brought home with him, he ate himself and fed the little one. Then he sat before the hearth with the child at his breast, as any mother might do, for at length it had come to him to know that, if it was not to be lost and worse than orphaned, he must henceforth be father and mother both to it.

And when the little eyes, wet no longer, but laughing like sunshine into the big seared face above them struggled in vain with sleep, he wrapped the child in his ragged guernsey and put it to lie like a bundle where the fire could warm it. Then all being done he sat again, and leaning his elbows on his knees covered his ears with his hands, so that they might shut out the sound of the woman's heavy breathing.

It was on that night, for the first time since he fled from Iceland, that he saw the full depth of his offense. Offense? Crime it was, and that of the blackest; and in the terror of his loneliness he trembled at the thought that some day his horrible dumb secret would become known, that something would happen to tell it—that he was married already when he married the woman who lay behind him.

At that he saw how low he had fallen—from her who once had

been so pure and true beside him, and had loved him and given up father, and home, and fame for him; to this trull, who now dragged him through the slush, and trod on him and hated him. Then the bitter thought came that what she had suffered for him who had given him everything, he could never repay by one kind word or look. Lost she was to him forever and ever, and parted from him by a yet wider gulf than eight hundred miles of sea. Such was the agony of his shame, and through it all the snore of the sleeping woman went like iron through his head, so that at last he wrapped his arms about it and sobbed out to the dead fire at his feet, "Rachel! Rachel! Rachel!"

All at once he became conscious that the heavy breathing had ceased, that the house was silent, that something had touched him on the shoulder, and that a gaunt shadow stood beside him. It was the woman, who at the sound of his voice had arisen from her drunken sleep, and now gasped:

"Who is Rachel?"

At that word his blood ran cold, and shivering in his clothes, he crouched lower at the hearth, neither answering her nor looking up.

Then with eyes of hate she cried again:

"Who is Rachel?"

But the only voice that answered her was the voice that rang within him—"I'm a lost man, God help me."

"Who is Rachel?" the woman cried once more, and the sound of that name from her lips, hardening it, brutalizing it, befouling it, was the most awful thing by which his soul had yet been shaken out of its stupor.

"Who is she, I say? Answer me," she cried in a raging voice; but he crouched there still, with his haggard face and misty eyes turned down.

Then she laid her hand on his shoulder and shook him, and cried bitterly.

"Who is she, this light o' love—this baggage?"

At that he stiffened himself up, shuddered from head to foot, flung her from him and answered in a terrible voice:

"Woman, she is my wife."

That word, like a thunderbolt, left a heavy silence behind it. Liza stood looking in terror at Stephen's face, unable to utter a cry.

But next day she went to Parson Gell and told him all. She got small comfort. Parson Gell had himself had two wives; the first had deserted him, and after an interval of six years, in which

he had not heard from her, he had married the second. So to Liza he said:

"He may have sinned against the law, but what proof have you? None."

Then she went to the Deemster at Ramsey. It was Deemster Lace—a bachelor much given to secret gallantries.

She got as little cheer from this source, but yet she came away with one drop of solace fermenting in the bitterness of her heart.

"Tut, woman, it's more common than you think for. And where's the harm? Och! it's happened to some of the best that's going. Now, if he'd beaten you, or struck you"—and the good man raised both hands and shook his head.

Then the thought leaped to her mind that she herself could punish Stephen a hundredfold worse than any law of bishop or deemster. If she could she would not now put him away. He should live on with her, husband or no husband, and she with him, wife or no wife.

On her way home she called at the house of Kane Wade, sat down with old Bridget; shed some crocodile tears, vowed she daren't have tould it on no account to no other morthal sowl, but would the heart of woman belave it? her man had a wife in his own counthry!

Bridget, who had herself had four husbands, lifted her hands in horror, and next day when Stephen Orry went down to the boats Kane Wade, who had newly turned Methodist, was there already, and told him—whittling a stick as he spoke—that the fishing was wonderful lean living gettin', and if he didn't shorten hands it would be goin' begging on the houses they'd all be, sarten sure.

Stephen took the hint in silence, and went off home. Liza saw him coming, watched him from the door, and studied his hard set face with a grim smile on her own.

Next day Stephen went off to Matt Mylechreest, the net-maker, but Matt shook his head, saying the Manxmen had struck against foreign men all over the island, and would not work with them. The day after that Stephen tried Nary Crowe, the innkeeper, but Nary said of course it wasn't himself that was partic'lar, only his customers were gettin' extraordinary nice about a man's moral character.

As a last hope Stephen went up to Cleave Kinley, who had land, and asked for a croft of five acres that ran down to the beach of Port-y-Vullin.

"Nothing easier," said Kinley, "but I must have six pounds for it, beginning half-quarter day."

The rent was high, but Stephen agreed to it, and promised to go again the following day to seal his bargain. Stephen was prompt to his engagement, but Kinley had gone on the mountains after some sheep. Stephen waited, and four hours later Kinley returned, looking abashed but dogged and saying he must have good security or a year's rent down.

Stephen went back home with his head deep in his breast. Again the woman saw him coming, again she studied his face, and again she laughed in her heart.

"He will lift his hand to me," she thought, "and then we shall see."

But he seemed to read her purpose, and determined to defeat it. She might starve him, herself, and their child, but the revenge she had set her mind upon she should not have.

Yet to live with her and to contain himself at every brutal act or bestial word was more than he could trust himself to do, and he determined to fly away. Let it be anywhere—anywhere, if only out of the torture of her presence. One place was like another in Man, for go where he would to any corner of the island, there she would surely follow him.

Old Thurston Coobragh, of Ballacreggan, gave him work at draining a flooded meadow. It was slavery that no other Christian man would do, but for a month Stephen Orry worked up to his waist in water, and lived on barley, bread, and porridge. At the end of his job he had six and thirty shillings saved, and with this money in his pocket, and the child in his arms, he hurried down to the harbor at Ramsey, where an Irish packet lay ready to sail.

Could he have passage to Ireland? Certainly he could, but where was his license?

Stephen Orry had never heard until then that before a man could leave the Isle of Man he must hold a license permitting him to do so.

"Go to the High Bailiff," said the captain of the packet; and to the High Bailiff Stephen Orry went.

"I come for a license to go away into Ireland," he said. "Very good. But where is your wife?" said the High Bailiff. "Are you leaving her behind you to be a burden on the parish?"

At that Stephen's heart sank, for he saw that his toil had been wasted, and that his savings were worthless. Doomed he was for all his weary days to live with the woman who hated him. He was bound to her, he was leashed to her, and he must go begrimed

and bedraggled to the dregs of life with her. So he went back home, and hid his money in a hole in the thatch of the roof, that the touch of it might vex his memory no more.

And then it flashed upon him that what he was now suffering from this woman was after all no more than the complement and counterpart of what Rachel had suffered from him in the years behind them. It was just—yes, it was just—and because he was a man and Rachel a woman, it was less than he deserved. So thinking, he sat himself down in his misery with resignation if not content, vowing never to lift his hand to the woman, however tormented, and never to leave her, however tempted. And when one night after a storm an open boat came ashore, he took it and used it to fish with, and thus he lived, and thus he wore away his wretched days.

And yet he could never have borne his punishment but for the sweet solace of the child. It was the flower in his dungeon; the bird at its bars. Since that bad night, when his secret had burst from him, he had nursed it and cherished it, and done for it its many tender offices. Every day he had softened its oatcake in his broth; and lifted the barley out of his own bowl into the child's basin. In summer he had stripped off shoes and stockings to bathe the little one in the bay, and in winter he had wrapped the child in his jacket and gone bare-armed. It was now four years old and went everywhere with Stephen, astride on his broad back or perched on his high shoulders. He had christened it Michael, but because its long wavy hair grew to be of the color of the sun he called it, after the manner of his people, Sunlocks. And like the sun it was, in that hut in Port-y-Vullin, for when it awoke there was a glint of rosy light, and when it slept all was gloom.

He taught it to speak his native Icelandic tongue, and the woman, who found everything evil that Stephen did, found this a barrier between her and the child. It was only in his ignorance that he did it. But oh, strange destiny! that out of the father's ignorance was to shape the child's wisdom in the days that were to come!

And little Sunlocks was eyes and ears to Stephen, and hope to his crushed spirit and intelligence to his slow mind. At sight of the child the vacant look would die away from Stephen's face; at play with him Stephen's great hulking legs would run hither and thither in ready willingness; and at hearing his strange questions, his wondrous answers, his pretty clever sayings, Stephen's dense wit would seem to stand agape.

Oh, little Sunlocks—little Sunlocks—floating like the day-dawn

into this lone man's prison house, how soon was your glad light to be overcast! For all at once it smote Stephen like a blow on the brain that though it was right that he should live with the woman, yet it was an awful thing that the child should continue to do so. Growing up in such an atmosphere, with such an example always present to his eyes, what would the child become? Soured, saddened, perhaps cunning, perhaps malicious; at least adapting himself, as his father had done before him, to the air he had to breathe. And thinking that little Sunlocks, now so sweet, so sunny, so artless, so innocent, must come to this, all the gall of Stephen Orry's fate rose to his throat again.

What could he do? Take little Sunlocks away? That was impossible, for he could not take himself away. Why had the child been born? Why had it not died? Would not the good God take it back to Himself even now, in all the sweetness of his childhood? No, no, no, not that either; and yet yes, yes, yes!

Stephen's poor slow brain struggled long with this thought, and at length a strange and solemn idea took hold of it: little Sunlocks must die, and he must kill him.

Stephen Orry did not wriggle with his conscience, or if he cozened it at all he made himself believe that it would not be sin but sacrifice to part with the thing he held dearest in all the world. Little Sunlocks was his life, but little Sunlocks must die! Better, better, better so!

And having thus determined, he went cautiously, and even cunningly, to work. When the little one had disappeared, he himself would never be suspected, for all the island would say he loved it too tenderly to do it a wrong, and he would tell everybody that he had taken it to some old body in the south who had wished to adopt a child. So, with Sunlocks laughing and crowing astride his shoulder, he called at Kane Wade's house on Ballure one day, and told Bridget how he should miss the little chap, for Sunlocks was going down to the Calf very soon, and would not come home again for a long time, perhaps not many a year, perhaps not until he was a big slip of a lad, and, maybe—who can tell?—he would never come back at all.

Thus he laid his plans, but even when they were complete he could not bring himself to carry them through, until one day, going up from the beach to sell a basket of crabs and eels, he found Liza drinking at the "Hibernian."

How she came by the money was at first his surprise, for Nary Crowe had long abandoned her; and having bitter knowledge of the way she had once spent his earnings, he himself gave her

nothing now. But suddenly a dark thought came, and he hurried home, thrust his hand into the thatch where he had hidden his savings, and found the place empty.

That was the day to do it, he thought; and he took little Sunlocks and washed his chubby face and combed his yellow hair, curling it over his own great undeft fingers, and put his best clothes on him—the white cotton pinafore and the red worsted cap, and the blue stockings freshly darned.

This he did that he might comfort the child for the last time, and also that he might remember him at his best.

And little Sunlocks, in high glee at such busy preparations, laughed much and chattered long, asking many questions.

"Where are we going, father? Out? Eh? Where?"

"We'll see, little Sunlocks; we'll see."

"But where? Church? What day is this?"

"The last, little Sunlocks; the last."

"Oh, I know—Sunday."

When all was ready, Stephen lifted the child to the old perch across his shoulders, and made for the shore. His boat was lying aground there; he pushed it adrift, lifted the child into it, and leaped after him. Then taking the oars, he pulled out for Maughold Head.

Little Sunlocks had never been out in the boat before, and everything was a wonder and delight to him.

"You said you would take me on the water some day. Didn't you, father?"

"Yes, little Sunlocks, yes."

It was evening, and the sun was sinking behind the land, very large and red in its setting.

"Do the sun fall down eve'y day, father?"

"It sets, little Sunlocks, it sets."

"What is sets?"

"Dies."

"Oh."

The waters lay asleep under the soft red glow, and over them the sea-fowl were sailing.

"Why are the white birds sc'eaming?"

"Maybe they're calling their young, little Sunlocks."

It was late spring, and on the headland the sheep were bleating.

"Look at the baby one—away, away up yonder. What's it doing there by itself on the 'ock, and c'ying, and c'ying, and c'ying?"

"Maybe it's lost, little Sunlocks."

"Then why doesn't somebody go and tell its father?"

And the innocent face was full of trouble.

The sun went down and the twilight deepened, the air grew chill, the waters black, and Stephen was still pulling round the head.

"Father, where does the night go when we are asleep?"

"To the other world, little Sunlocks."

"Oh, I know—heaven."

Stephen stripped off his guernsey and wrapped it about the child. His eyes shone brightly, his mouth was parched, but he did not flinch. All thoughts, save one thought, had faded from his view.

As he came by Port Mooar the moon rose, and about the same time the light appeared on Point of Ayre. A little later he saw the twikle of lesser lights to the south. They were the lights of Laxey, where many happy children gladdened many happy firesides. He looked around. There was not a sail in sight, and not a sound came to his ears over the low murmur of the sea's gentle swell. "Now is the time," he thought. He put in his oars and the boat began to drift.

But no, he could not look into the child's eyes and do it. The little one would sleep soon and then it would be easier done. So he took him in his arms and wrapped him in a piece of sail-cloth.

"Shut your eyes and sleep, little Sunlocks."

"I'm not sleepy, I'm not."

Yet soon the little lids fell, opened again and fell once more, and then suddenly the child started up.

"But I haven't said my p'ayers."

"Say them now, little Sunlocks."

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, Look upon a little child, Guard me while in sleep I lie, Take me to Thy home on—on—"

"Would you like to go to heaven, little Sunlocks?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I want to keep with—with—my fath—"

The little eyes were closed by this time, and the child was asleep on Stephen's knees. Now was the time—now—now. But no, it was harder now than ever.

The little face—so silent, so peaceful—how formidable it was! The little soft hand in his own big hard palm—how strong and terrible!

Stephen looked down at the child and his bowels yearned over it. It cost him a struggle not to kiss it; but no, that would only make the task harder.

Suddenly a new thought smote him. What had this child done

that he should take its life? Who was he that he should rob it of what he could never give it again? By what right did he dare to come between this living soul and heaven? When did the Almighty God tell *him* what the after life of this babe was to be? Stephen trembled at the thought. It was like a voice from the skies calling on him to stop, and a hand reaching out of them to snatch the child from his grasp.

What he had intended to do was not to be! Heaven had set its face against it! Little Sunlocks was not to die! Little Sunlocks was to live! Thank God! Oh! Thank God!

But late that night a group of people standing at their doors on the beach at Port Lague saw a tall man in his shirt-sleeves go by in the darkness, with a sleeping child in his arms. The man was Stephen Orry, and he was sobbing like a woman whose heart is broken. The child was little Sunlocks, and he was being carried back to his mother's home.

The people hailed Stephen and told him that a foreigner from a ship in the bay had been asking for him that evening. They had sent the man along to Port-y-Vullin.

Stephen hurried home with fear in his heart. In five minutes he was there, and then his life's blood ran cold. He found the house empty, except for his wife, and she lay outstretched on the floor. She was cold—she was dead; and in clay on the wall above her head, these words were written in the Icelandic tongue: "So is Patricksen avenged—*signed S. Patricksen.*"

Avenged! Oh, powers of Heaven, that drive the petty passions of men like dust before you!

CHAPTER VI

THE LITTLE WORLD OF BOY AND GIRL

THREE days later the bad lottery of Liza Killey's life and death was played out and done. On the morning of the fourth day, some time before the dawn, though the mists were rolling in front of it, Stephen Orry rose in his silent hut in Port-y-Vullin, lit a fire, cooked a hasty meal, wakened, washed, dressed, and fed little Sunlocks, then nailed up the door from the outside, lifted the child to his shoulders, and turned his face toward the south. When he passed through Laxey the sun stood high, and the dust of the roads was being driven in their faces. It was long past noon when

he came to Douglas, and at a little shop by the harbor-bridge he bought a pennyworth of barley cake, gave half to Sunlocks, put the other half into his pocket, and pushed on with longer strides. The twilight was deepening when he reached Castletown, and there he inquired for the house of the Governor. It was pointed out to him, and through heavy iron gates, up a winding carriage-way lined with elms and bordered with daffodils, he made toward the only door he saw.

It was the main entrance to Government House, a low broad porch, with a bench on either side and a cross-barred door of knotted oak. Stephen Orry paused before it, looked nervously around, and then knocked with his knuckles. He had walked six and twenty miles, carrying the child all the way. He was weary, footsore, hungry, and covered with dust. The child on his shoulder was begrimed and dirty, his little face smeared in streaks, his wavy hair loaded and unkempt. A footman in red and buff, powdered, starched, gartered, and dainty, opened the door. Stephen Orry asked for the Governor. The footman looked out with surprise at the bedraggled man with the child, and asked who he was. Stephen told his name. The footman asked where he came from. Stephen answered. The footman asked what he came for. Stephen did not reply. Was it for a meal? Stephen shook his head. Or money? Stephen said no. With another glance of surprise the footman shut the door, saying the Governor was at dinner.

Stephen Orry lowered the little one from his shoulder, sat on the bench in the porch, placed the child on his knee, and gave him the remainder of the barley cake. All the weary journey through he had been patient and cheerful, the brave little man, never once crying aloud at the pains of his long ride, never once whimpering at the dust that blinded him, or the heat that made him thirsty. Holding on at his father's cap, he had laughed and sung even with the channels still wet on his cheeks where the big drops had rolled from his eyes to his chin.

Little Sunlocks munched at his barley cake in silence, and in the gathering darkness Stephen watched him as he ate. All at once a silvery peal of child's laughter came from within the house, and little Sunlocks dropped the barley cake from his mouth to listen. Again it came; and the grimy face of little Sunlocks lightened to a smile, and that of Stephen Orry lowered and fell.

"Wouldn't you like to live in a house like this, little Sunlocks?"

"Yes—with my father."

Just then the dark door opened again, and the footman, with a taper in his hand, came out to light the lamp in the porch.

"What? Here still?" he said.

"I am; been waiting to see the Governor," Stephen Orry answered.

Then the footman went in, and told the Governor that a big man and a child were sitting in the porch, talking some foreign lingo together, and refusing to go away without seeing His Excellency.

"Bring them in," said the Governor.

Adam Fairbrother was at the dinner-table, enveloped in tobacco clouds. His wife, Ruth, had drawn her chair aside that she might knit. Stephen Orry entered slowly with little Sunlocks by the hand.

"This is the person, your Excellency," said the footman.

"Come in, Stephen Orry," said the Governor.

Stephen Orry's face softened at that word of welcome. The footman's dropped and he disappeared.

Then Stephen told his errand. "I shall come to have give you something," he said, trying to speak in English.

Adam's wife raised her eyes and glanced over him. Adam himself laid down his pipe and held out his hand toward Sunlocks. But Stephen held the child back a moment and spoke again.

"It's all I shall have got to give," he said.

"What is it?" said Adam.

"The child," said Stephen, and passed little Sunlocks to Adam's outstretched hand.

At that Adam's wife dropped her knitting to her lap, but Stephen, seeing nothing of the amazement written in her face, went on in his broken words to tell them all—of his wife's life, her death, his own sore temptation, and the voice out of heaven that had called to him. And then with a moistened eye and a glance at Sunlocks, and in a lowered tone as if fearing the child might hear, he spoke of what he meant to do now—of how he would go back to the herrings, and maybe to sea, or perhaps down into the mines, but never again to Port-y-Vullin. And, because a lone man was no company for a child, and could not take a little one with him if he would, he had come to it at last that he must needs part with little Sunlocks, lending him, or maybe giving him, to some one he could trust.

"And so," he said, huskily, "I shall say to me often and often: 'The Governor is a good man and kind to me long, long ago, and I shall give little Sunlocks to him.'"

He had dropped his head into his breast as he spoke, and being now finished he stood fumbling his scraggy goatskin cap.

Then Adam's wife, who had listened in mute surprise, drew herself up, took a long breath, looked first at Stephen, then at Adam, then back at Stephen, and said in a bated whisper:

"Well! Did any living soul ever hear the like in this island before?"

Not rightly understanding what this might mean, poor Stephen looked back at her, in his weak, dazed way, but made her no answer.

"Children might be scarce," she said, and gave a little angry toss of her head.

Still the meaning of what she said had not worked its way through Stephen's slow wit, and he mumbled in his poor blundering fashion:

"He is all I have, ma'am."

"Lord-a-massy, man," she cried, sharply, "but we might have every child in the parish at your price."

Stephen's fingers now clutched at his cap, his parted lips quivered, and again he floundered out, stammering like an idiot:

"But I love him, ma'am, more nor all the world."

"Then I'll thank you to keep him," she answered, hotly; and after that there was dead silence for a moment.

In all Stephen's reckoning never once had he counted on this—that after he had brought himself to that sore pass, at which he could part with Sunlocks and turn his back on him, never more to be cheered by his sunny face and merry tongue, never again to be wakened by him in the morning, never to listen for his gentle breathing in the night, never to feed him and wash him, never to carry him shoulder high, any human creature could say no to him from thought of the little food he would eat or the little trouble he would ask.

Stephen stood a moment, with his poor, bewildered, stupefied face hung down and the great lumps surging hot in his throat, and then, without a word more, he stretched out his hand toward the child.

But all this time Adam had looked on with swimming eyes, and now he drew little Sunlocks yet closer between his knees, and said, quietly:

"Ruth, we are going to keep the little one. Two fagots will burn better than one, and this sweet boy will be company for our little Greeba."

"Adam," she cried, "haven't you children enough of your own, but you must needs take other folks'?"

"Ruth," he answered, "I have six sons, and if they had been

twelve, perhaps, I should have been better pleased, so they had all been as strong and hearty; and I have one daughter, and if there had been two it would have suited me as well."

Now the rumor of Stephen Orry's former marriage, which Liza had so zealously set afoot, had reached Government House by way of Lague, and while Stephen had spoken Adam had remembered the story, and thinking of it he had smoothed the head of little Sunlocks with a yet tenderer hand. But Adam's wife, recalling it now, said warmly:

"Maybe you think it wise to bring up your daughter with the merry-begot of any ragabash that comes prowling along from goodness knows where."

"Ruth," said Adam, as quietly as before, "we are going to keep the little one," and at that his wife rose and walked out of the room.

The look of bewilderment had not yet been driven from Stephen Orry's face by the expression of joy that had followed it, and now he stood glancing from Adam to the door and from the door to Adam, as much as to say that if his coming had brought strife he was ready to go. But the Governor waved his hand, as though following his thought and dismissing it. Then lifting the child to his knee, he asked his name, whereupon the little man himself answered promptly that his name was Sunlocks.

"Michael," said Stephen Orry; "but I call him Sunlocks."

"Michael Sunlocks—a good name, too. And what is his age?"

"Four years."

"Just the age of my own darling," said the Governor; and setting the child on his feet he rang the bell and said: "Bring little Greeba here."

A minute later a little brown-haired lassie with ruddy cheeks and laughing lips and sparkling brown eyes came racing into the room. She was in her nightgown, ready for bed, her feet were bare, and under one arm she carried a doll.

"Come here, Greeba veg," said the Governor, and he brought the children face to face, and then stood aside to watch them.

They regarded each other for a moment with the solemn aloofness that only children know, twisting and curling aside, eying one another furtively, neither of them seeming so much as to see the other, yet neither seeing anything or anybody else. This little freak of child manners ran its course, and then Sunlocks, never heeding his dusty pinafore, or the little maiden's white nightgown, but glancing down at her bare feet, and seeming to remember that when his own were shoeless some one carried him, stepped up to her, put his arms about her, and with lordly, masculine superiority

of strength proceeded to lift her bodily in his arms. The attempt was a disastrous failure, and in another moment the two were rolling over each other on the floor; a result that provoked the little maiden's direst wrath and the blank astonishment of little Sunlocks.

But before the tear-drop of vexation was yet dry on Greeba's face, or the silent bewilderment had gone from the face of Sunlocks, she was holding out her doll in a sidelong way in his direction, as much as to say he might look at it if he liked, only he must not think that she was asking him; and he, nothing loth for her fierce reception of his gallant tender, was devouring the strange sight with eyes full of awe.

Then followed some short inarticulate chirps and the doll was passed to Sunlocks, who turned the strange thing—such as eyes of his had never beheld—over and over and over, while the little woman brought out from dark corners of the room, and from curious recesses unknown save to her own hands and knees, a slate with a pencil and sponge tied to it by a string, a picture-book whereof the binding hung loose, some bits of ribbon, red and blue, and finally three tiny cups and saucers with all the accompanying wonder of cream jug and teapot. In three minutes more two little bodies were sitting on their haunches, two little tongues were cackling and gobbling, the room was rippling over with a merry twitter, the strange serious air was gone from the little faces, the little man and the little maid were far away already in the little world of childhood, and all the universe beside was gone, and lost, and forgotten.

Stephen Orry had looked down from his great height at the encounter on the floor, and his dull, slow eyes had filled, for in some way that he could not follow there had come to him at that sweet sight the same deep yearning that had pained him in the boat. And seeing how little Sunlocks was rapt, Stephen struggled hard with himself and said, turning to the Governor:

"Now's the time for me to slip away."

Then he left the room, unnoticed of the busy people on the floor.

Two hours later, after little Sunlocks, having first missed his father, his life's friend and only companion, had cried a little, and soon ceased to cry out of joy of his new comradeship, and had then nestled down his sunny head on the pillow where little Greeba's curly poll also lay, with the doll between him and her, and some marbles in his hand to comfort his heart, Stephen Orry, unable to drag himself away, was tramping the dark roads about the house. He went off at length, and was seen no more at Castletown for many years thereafter.

Now this adoption of little Sunlocks into the family of the Governor was an incident that produced many effects, and the first of them was the serious estrangement of Adam and his wife. Never had two persons of temperaments so opposed lived so long in outward harmony. Her face, like some mountain country, revealed its before and after. Its spring must have been keen and eager, its summer was overcast, and its winter would be cold and frozen. She was not a Manxwoman, but came of a family of French refugees, settled as advocates on the north of the island. Always vain of show, she had married in her early womanhood, when Adam Fairbrother was newly returned from Barbary, and his adventures abroad were the common gossip and speculation. But Adam had disappointed her ambition at the outset by dropping into the ruts of a homely life. Only once had she lifted him out of them, and that was after twenty years, when the whim and wisdom of the Duke had led him to visit Lague; and then her impatience, her importunity, her fuss and flurry, and appeals in the name of their children, had made him Governor. Meantime, she had borne him six sons in rapid succession during the first ten years of marriage, and after an interval of ten other years she had borne a daughter. Four-and-twenty years the good man had lived at peace with her, drained of his serenity by her restlessness, and of his unselfishness by her self-seeking. With a wise contempt of trifles, he had kept peace over little things, and the island had long amused itself about his pliant disposition, but now that for the first time he proved unyielding, the island said he was wrong. To adopt a child against the wish of his wife, to take into his family the waif of a drunken woman and an idle foreigner, was an act of stubborn injustice and folly. But Adam held to his purpose, and Michael Sunlocks remained at Government House.

A year passed, and Sunlocks was transformed. No one would have recognized him. The day his father brought him he had been pale under the dust that covered him; he had been timid and had trembled, and his eyes had looked startled, as though he had already been beaten and cuffed and scolded. A child, like a flower, takes the color of the air it breathes, and Sunlocks had not been too young to feel the grimy cold of the atmosphere in which he had been born. But now he had opened like a rose to the sun, and his cheeks were ruddy and his eyes were bright. He had become plump and round and sturdy, and his hair had curled around his head and grown yet warmer of hue, like the plumes of a bird in the love season. And, like a bird, he chirruped the long day through, skipping and tripping and laughing and singing all over

the house, idolized by some, beloved by many, caressed by all, even winning upon Mrs. Fairbrother herself, who, whatever her objection to his presence, had not yet steeled herself against his sweetness.

Another year passed, and the children grew together—Sunlocks and Greeba, boy and girl, brother and sister—in the innocent communion of healthy childhood, with their little whims, their little ways, their little tiffs, and with the little sorrows that overcast existence. And Sunlocks picked up his English words as fast as he picked shells on the beach, gathering them on his tongue as he gathered the shells into his pinafore, dropping them and picking them up again.

Yet another year went by, and then over the luminous innocence of the children there crept the strange trail of sex, revealing already their little differences of character, and showing what they were to be in days to come—the little maid, quick, urgent, impulsive, and vain; the little man, quiet, unselfish and patient, but liable to outbursts of temper.

A fourth year passed, and then the little people were parted. The Duchess came from London, where her nights had no repose and her days no freshness, to get back a little of the color of the sun into her pallid cheeks, and driving one day from Mount Murray to Government House she lit on Greeba in the road outside Castletown. It was summer, and the little maid of eight, bright as the sunlight that glistened on her head, her cheeks all pink and white, her eyes sparkling under her dark lashes, her brown hair rippling behind her, her frock tucked up in fishwife fashion, her legs bare, and her white linen sunbonnet swinging in her hand, was chasing a butterfly amid the yellow-tipped gorse that grew by the roadside. That vision of beauty and health awakened a memory of less charm and freshness. The Duchess remembered a little maiden of her own who was also eight years old, dainty and pretty, but pale and sickly, peaked up in a chill stone house in London, playing alone with bows and ribbons, talking to herself, and having no companion except a fidgety French governess, who was wrinkled and had lost some of her teeth.

A few days later the Duchess came again to Government House, bought a gay new hat for Greeba, and proposed that the little maid should go home with her as playfellow for her only child. Adam promptly said "No" to her proposal, with what emphasis his courtesy would permit, urging that Greeba, being so much younger than her brothers, was like an only child in the family, and that she was in any case an only daughter. But Adam's wife, thinking she saw

her opportunity, found many reasons why Greeba should be allowed to go. For would it be right to cross the wish of so great a lady?—and one, too, who was in a sense their mistress also. And then who could say what the Duchess might do for the child some day?—and in any event wasn't it a chance for which anybody else in the island would give both his ears to have his daughter brought up in London, and at the great house of the Duke of Athol?

The end of it was that Adam yielded to his wife now, as he had often yielded before. "But I'll sadly miss my little lassie," he said, "and I much misdoubt but I'll repent me of letting her go."

Yet, while Adam shook his head and looked troubled, the little maid herself was in an ecstasy of delight.

"And you would really like to go to London, Greeba ven?"

"But should I see the carriages, and the ladies on horseback, and the shops, and the little girls in velvet—should I, eh?"

"Maybe so, my ven, maybe so."

"Oh!"

The little maid gave one glance at the infinite splendor of her new bow and feather, and her dark eyes sparkled, while the eyes of her father filled.

"But not Michael Sunlocks, you know, Greeba ven; no, nor mother, nor father."

At that word there was a pretty downward curve of the little lip; but life had no real sorrow for one with such a hat and such a prospect, and the next instant the bright eyes leaped again to the leaping heart.

"Then run away, Greeba ven—run."

The little maiden took her father at his word, though it was but sadly spoken, and bounded off in chase of Michael Sunlocks, that she might tell him the great news. She found him by the old wooden bridge of the Silver Burn near the Malew Church.

Michael Sunlocks had lately struck up a fast friendship with the carrier, old crazy Chalse A'Killey, who sometimes lent him his donkey for a ride. Bareheaded, barefooted, with breeches rolled up above the knees, his shoes and stockings swung about his neck, and his wavy yellow hair rough and tangled, Michael Sunlocks was now seated bareback on this donkey, tugging the rope that served it for curb and snaffle, and persuading it, by help of a blackthorn stick, to cross the river to the meadow opposite. And it was just when the donkey, a creature of becoming meekness and most venerable age, was reflecting on these arguments, and contemplating the water at his shoes with a pensive eye, that Greeba, radiant in

the happiness of her marvelous hat, came skipping on to the bridge.

In a moment she blurted out her news between many gusts of breath, and Michael Sunlocks, pausing from his labors, sat on his docile beast and looked up at her with great wonder in his wide blue eyes.

"And I shall see the carriages, and the ladies on horseback, and the ships, and the waxworks, and the wild beasts."

The eyes of Sunlocks grew hazy and wet, but the little maiden rattled on, cocking her eye down as she spoke at her reflection in the smooth river, for it took a world of glances to grow familiar with the marvel that sat on her head.

"And I shall wear velvet frocks, and have new hats often and lots of goodies and things; and—and didn't I always say a good fairy would come for me some day?'"

"What are you talking of, you silly?" said Michael Sunlocks.

"I'm not a silly, and I'm going away, and you are not; and I'll have girls to play with now, not boys—there!"

Michael Sunlocks could bear no more. His eyes overflowed, but his cheeks reddened, and he said:

"What do I care, you stupid? You can go if you like," and then down came his stick with a sounding thwack on the donkey's flank.

Now startled out of all composure by such sudden and summary address, the beast threw up his hinder legs and ducked down his head, and tumbled his rider into the water. Michael Sunlocks scrambled to his feet, all dripping wet, but with eyes aflame and his little lips set hard, and then laid hold of the rope bridle and tugged with one hand, while with the stick in the other he cudgeled the donkey until he had forced it to cross the river.

While this tough work was going forward, Greeba, who had shrieked at Michael's fall, stood trembling with clasped hands on the bridge, and, when all was over, the little man turned to her with high disdain, and said, after a mighty toss of his glistening wet head:

"Did you think I was drowned, you silly? Why don't you go, if you're going?'"

Not all the splendor of bow and feather could help the little maiden to withstand indifference like this, so her lip fell, and she said:

"Well, you needn't say so, if you *are* glad I'm going."

And Sunlocks answered: "Who says I'm glad? Not that I say I'm not, neither," he added quickly, leaping astride his beast again.

Whereupon Greeba said: "If *you* had been going away *I* should have cried," and then, to save herself from bursting out in his very face, she turned about quickly and fled.

"But I'm not such a silly, I'm not," Michael Sunlocks shouted after her, and down came another thwack on the donkey, and away he sped across the meadow. But before he had ridden far he drew rein and twisted about, and now his blue eyes were swimming once more.

"Greeba," he called, and his little voice broke, but no answer came back to him.

"Greeba," he called again, more loudly, but Greeba did not stop.

"Greeba!" he shouted with all his strength. "Greeba! Greeba!"

But the little maid had gone, and there was no response. The bees were humming in the gold of the gorse, and the fireflies were buzzing about the donkey's ears, while the mountains were fading away into a dim wet haze.

Half an hour later the carriage of the Duchess drove out through the iron gates of Government House, and the little maiden seated in it by the side of the stately lady, was crying in a voice of childlike grief:

"Sunlocks! Sunlocks! Little Sunlocks!"

The advantage which the Governor's wife proposed to herself in parting with her daughter she never gained, and one of the secret ends of her life was thereby not only disappointed but defeated; for while the Duchess did nothing for Greeba, the girl's absence from home led Adam to do the more for Michael Sunlocks. Deprived of his immediate object of affection, his own little maiden, Adam lavished his love on the stranger whom chance had brought to his door; being first prompted thereto by the thought, which came only when it was too late, that in sending Greeba away to be company to some other child he had left poor little Sunlocks at home to be sole company to himself.

But Michael Sunlocks soon won for himself the caresses that were once due merely to pity of his loneliness, and Adam's heart went out to him with the strong affection of a father. He throve, he grew—a tall, lithe, round-limbed lad, with a smack of the man in his speech and ways, and all the strong beauty of a vigorous woman in his face. Year followed year, his school days came and went, he became more and yet more the Governor's quick right hand, his pen and his memory, even his judgment, and the staff he leaned on. It was "Michael Sunlocks" here, and "Michael Sunlocks" there, and "Michael Sunlocks will see to that," and "You

may safely leave it to Michael Sunlocks"; and meantime the comely and winsome lad, with man's sturdy independence of spirit, but a woman's yearning for love, having long found where this account lay in the house of Governor Fairbrother, clung to that good man with more than the affection, because less than the confidence, of a son, and like a son he stood to him.

Now, for one who found this relation sweet and beautiful, there were many who found it false and unjust, implying an unnatural preference of a father for a stranger before his own children; and foremost among those who took this unfavorable view were Mrs. Fairbrother and her sons. She blamed her husband, and they blamed Michael Sunlocks.

The six sons of Adam Fairbrother had grown into six rude men, all big, lusty fellows, rough and hungry, seared and scarred like the land they lived on, but differing much at many points. Asher, the eldest, three-and-thirty when Sunlocks was fifteen, was fair, with gray eyes, flabby face, and no chin to speak of, good-hearted, but unstable as water. He was for letting the old man and the lad alone. "Aisy, man, aisy, what's the odds?" he would say, in his drawling way of speaking. But Ross, the second son, and Stean, the third, both cruel and hot-blooded men, reproached Asher with not objecting from the first, for "Och," they would say, "one of these fine days the ship will be wrecked and scuttled before yer very eyes, and not a pound of cargo left at her; and all along of that cursed young imp that's after sniffin' and sniffin' abaft of the ould man,"—a figure of speech which meant that Adam would will his belongings to Michael Sunlocks. And at that conjecture, Thurstan, the fourth son, a black-bearded fellow in top boots, always red-eyed with much drinking, but strong of will and the ruler of his brethren, would say: "Aw, well, let the little beachcomber keep his weather eye liftin'"; and Jacob, the fifth son, sandy as a fox, and as sly and watchful, and John, the youngest, known as Gentleman Johnny, out of tribute to his love of dress, would shake their heads together, and hint that they would yet find a way to cook the goose of any smooth-faced hypocrite shamming Abraham.

Many a device they tried to get Michael Sunlocks turned away. They brought bad stories of his father, Stephen Orry, now a name of terror to good people from north to south of the island, a secret trader running between the revenue cutters in the ports and the smugglers outside, perhaps a wrecker haunting the rough channels of the Calf, an outlaw growing rich by crime, and, maybe, by blood. The evil rumors made no impression on old Adam, but they

produced a powerful effect where no effect had been expected. Bit by bit, as his heart went out to the Governor, there grew upon Michael Sunlocks a deep loathing of the very name and thought of his father. The memory of his father was now a thing of the mind, not the affections; and the chain of the two emotions, love for his foster father and dread of his natural one, slowly but surely tightened about him, so that his strongest hope was that he might never again set eyes on Stephen Orry. By this weakness he fell at length into the hands of the six Fairbrothers, and led the way to a total rupture of old Adam's family.

One day when Michael Sunlocks was eighteen years old a man came to him from Kirk Maughold with an air of wondrous mystery. It was Nary Crowe, the innkeeper, now bald, bottled-nosed, and in a bad state of preservation. His story, intended for Michael's ear alone, was that Stephen Orry, flying from the officers of the revenue cutters, was on the point of leaving the island forever, and must see his son before going. If the son would not go to the father, then the father must come to the son. The meeting-place proposed was a schooner lying outside the Calf Sound, and the hour midnight of the day following.

It was as base a plot as the heart of an enemy ever concocted, for the schooner was a smuggler, and the men of the revenue cutter were in hiding under the Black Head to watch her movements. The lad, in fear of his father, fell into the trap, and was taken prisoner on suspicion in a gig making for the ship. He confessed all to the Governor, and Nary Crowe was arrested. To save his own carcass Nary gave up his employers. They were Ross and Stean Fairbrother, and Ross and Stean being questioned pointed to their brothers Jacob and Gentleman Johnny as the instigators of the scheme.

When the revelation was complete, and the Governor saw that all but his whole family was implicated, and that the stain on his house was so black that the island would ever remember it against him, his placid spirit forsook him and his wrath knew no bounds. But the evil was not ended there, for Mrs. Fairbrother took sides with her sons, and straightway vowed to live no longer under the same roof with an unnatural father, who found water thicker than blood.

At that Adam was shaken to his depths. The taunt passed him by, but the threat touched him sorely.

"It would be but a poor business," he said, "to part now after so many years of life together, with seven children that should be as bonds between us, in our age and looking to a longer parting."

But Mrs. Fairbrother was resolved to go with her sons, and never again to darken her husband's doors.

"You have been a true wife to me and led a good life," said Adam, "and have holpen me through many troubles, and we have had cheerful hours together despite some crosses."

But Mrs. Fairbrother was not to be pacified.

"Then let us not part in anger," said Adam, "and though I will not do your bidding, and send away the lad—no, nor let him go of himself, now that for sake of peace he asks it—yet to show you that I mean no wrong by my own flesh and blood, this is what I will do: I have my few hundreds for my office, but all I hold that I can call my own is Lague. Take it—it shall be yours for your lifetime, and our sons' and their sister's after you."

At these terms the bad bargain was concluded, and Mrs. Fairbrother went away to Lague, leaving Adam with Michael Sunlocks, at Government House.

And the old man, being now alone with the lad, though his heart never wavered or rued the price he had paid for him, often turned yearningly toward thoughts of his daughter Greeba, so that at length he said, speaking of her as the child he had parted from: "I can live no longer without my little lass, and will go and fetch her."

Then he wrote to the Duchess at her house in London, and a few days afterward he followed his letter.

He had been a week gone when Michael Sunlocks, having now the Governor's routine work to do, was sent for out of the north of the island to see to the light on the Point of Ayre, where there was then no lighthouse, but only a flare stuck out from a pole at the end of a sandstone jetty, a poor proxy, involving much risk to ships. Two days he was away, and returning home he slept a night at Douglas, rising at sunrise to make the last stage of his journey to Castletown. He was riding Goldie, the Governor's little roan; the season was spring, and the morning, fresh from its long draft of dew, was sweet and beautiful. But Michael Sunlocks rode heavily along, for he was troubled by many misgivings. He was asking himself for the hundredth time whether it was right of him, and a true man's part, to suffer himself to stand between Adam Fairbrother and his family. The sad breach being made, all that he could do to heal it was to take himself away, whether Adam favored that course or not. And he had concluded that, painful as the remedy would be, yet he must needs take it, and that very speedily, when he came up to the gate of Government

House, and turned Goldie down the path to the left that led to the stables.

He had not gone far when over the lowing of the cattle in the byres, and the steady munching of the sheep on the other side of the hedge, and through the smell of the early grass there came to him the sweetest sounds he had ever heard, and some of the queerest and craziest. Without knowing what he did, or why he did it, but taking himself at his first impulse, he drew rein, and Goldie came to a stand on the mossgrown pathway. Then he knew that two were talking together a little in front of him, but partly hidden by a turn of the path and the thick trammon that bordered it. Rising in his stirrups he could see one of them, and it was his old friend, Chalse A'Killey, the carrier, a shambling figure in a guernsey and blue seaman's cap, with tousled hair and a simple vacant face, and lagging lower lip, but eyes of a strange brightness.

And "Aw, yes," Chalse was saying, "he's a big lump of a boy grown, and no pride at all, at all, and a fine English tongue at him, and clever extraordinary. Him and me's same as brothers, and he was mortal fond to ride my ould donkey when he was a slip of a lad. Aw, yes, him and me's middlin' well acquent."

Then some linnets that were hiding in the trammon began to twitter, and what was said next Michael Sunlocks did not catch, but only heard the voice that answered old Chalse, and that seemed to make the music of the birds sound harsh.

"What like is he? Is it like it is?" old Chalse said again. "Aw, straight as the backbone of a herrin' and tall and strong; and as for a face, maybe there's not a man in the island to hold a candle to him. Och, no, nor a woman neither—saving yourself, maybe. And aw, now, the sweet and tidy ye're looking this morning, anyway: as fresh as the dewdrop, my chree."

Goldie grew restless, began to paw the path, and twist his round flanks into the leaves of the trammon, and at the next instant Michael Sunlocks was aware that there was a flutter in front of him, and a soft tread on the silent moss, and before he could catch back the lost consciousness of that moment, a light and slender figure shot out with a rhythm of gentle movement, and stood in all its grace and lovely sweetness two paces beyond the head of his horse.

"Greeba!" thought Michael Sunlocks; and sure enough it was she, in the first bloom of her womanhood, with gleams of her child face haunting her still and making her woman's face luminous, with the dark eyes softened and the dimpled cheeks

smoothed out. She was bareheaded, and the dark fall of her hair was broken over her ears by eddies of wavy curls. Her dress was very light and loose, and it left the proud lift of her throat bare, as well as the tower of her round neck, and a hint of the full swell of her bosom.

In a moment Michael Sunlocks dropped from the saddle and held out his hand to Greeba, afraid to look into her face as yet, and she put out her hand to him and blushed: both frightened more than glad. He tried to speak, but never a word would come, and he felt his cheeks burn red. But her eyes were shy of his, and nothing she saw but the shadow of Michael's tall form above her and a glint of the uncovered shower of fair hair that had made him Sunlocks. She turned her eyes aside a moment, then quickly recovered herself and laughed a little, partly to hide her own confusion and partly in joy at the sight of his, and all this time he held her hand, arrested by a sudden gladness, such as comes with the first sunshine of spring and the scent of the year's first violet.

There was then the harsh scrape on the path of old Chalse A'Killey's heavy feet going off, and, the spell being broken, Greeba was the first to speak.

"You were glad when I went away—are you sorry that I have come back again?"

But his breath was gone and he could not answer, so he only laughed, and pulled the reins of the horse over its head and walked before it by Greeba's side as she turned toward the stable. In the cow-house the kine were lowing, over the half-door a calf held out his red and white head and munched and munched, on the wall a peacock was strutting, and across the paved yard the two walked together, Greeba and Michael Sunlocks, softly, without words, with quick glances and quicker blushes.

Adam Fairbrother saw them from a window of the house, and he said to himself: "Now God grant that this may be the end of all partings between them and me." That chanced to be the day before Good Friday, and it was only three days afterward that Adam sent for Michael Sunlocks to see him in his room.

Sunlocks obeyed, and found a strange man with the Governor. The stranger was of more than middle age, rough of dress, bearded, tanned, of long flaxen hair, an ungainly but colossal creature. When they came face to face, the face of Michael Sunlocks fell, and that of the man lightened visibly.

"This is your son, Stephen Orry," said old Adam, in a voice that trembled and broke. "And this is your father, Michael Sunlocks."

Then Stephen Orry, with a depth of languor in his slow gray eyes, made one step toward Michael Sunlocks, and half opened his arms as if to embrace him. But a pitiful look of shame crossed his face at that moment, and his arms fell again. At the same instant Michael Sunlocks, growing very pale and dizzy, drew slightly back, and they stood apart, with Adam between them.

"He has come for you to go away into his own country," Adam said, falteringly.

It was Easter Day, nineteen years after Stephen Orry had fled from Iceland.

CHAPTER VII

THE VOW OF STEPHEN ORRY

Stephen Orry's story was soon told. He desired that his son, being now of an age that suited it, should go to the Latin school at Reykjavik, to study there under old Bishop Petersen, a good man whom all Icelanders venerated, and he himself had known from his childhood up. He could bear the expense of it, and saying so he hung his head a little. An Irish brig, hailing from Belfast, and bound for Reykjavik, was to put in at Ramsey on the Saturday following. By that brig he wished his son to sail. He should be back at the little house in Port-y-Vullin between this and then, and he desired to see his son there, having something of consequence to say to him. That was all. Fumbling his cap, the great creature shambled out, and was gone before the others were aware.

Then Michael Sunlocks declared stoutly that come what might he would not go. Why should he? Who was this man that he should command his obedience? His father? Then what, as a father, had he done for him? Abandoned him to the charity of others. What was he? One whom he had thought of with shame, hoping never to set eyes on his face. And now, this man, this father, this thing of shame, would have him sacrifice all that was near and dear to him, and leave behind the only one who had been, indeed, his father, and the only place that had been, in truth, his home. But no, that base thing he should not do. And, saying this, Michael Sunlocks tossed his head proudly, though there was a great gulp in his throat and his shrill voice had risen to a cry.

And to all this rush of protest old Adam, who had first stared out at the window with a look of sheer bewilderment, and then sat before the fire to smoke, trying to smile though his mouth would

not bend, and to say something more though there seemed nothing to say, answered only in a thick under-breath: "He is your father, my lad; he is your father."

Hearing this again and again repeated, even after he had fenced it with many answers, Michael Sunlocks suddenly bethought himself of all that had so lately occurred, and the idea came to him in the whirl of his stunned senses that perhaps the Governor wished him to go, now that they could part without offense or reproach on either side. At that bad thought his face fell, and though little given to woman's ways he had almost flung himself at old Adam's feet to pray of him not to send him away whatever happened, when all at once he remembered his vow of the morning. What had come over him since he made that vow, that he was trying to draw back now? He thought of Greeba, of the Governor, and again of Greeba. Had the coming of Greeba altered all? Was it because Greeba was back home that he wished to stay? Was it for that the Governor wished him to go, needing him now no more? He did not know, he could not think; only the hot flames rose to his cheeks and the hot tears to his eyes, and he tossed his head again mighty proudly, and said as stoutly as ever: "Very well—very well—I'll go—since you wish it."

Now old Adam saw but too plainly what mad strife was in the lad's heart to be wroth with him for all the ingratitude of his thought, so, his wrinkled face working hard with many passions—sorrow and tenderness, yearning for the lad and desire to keep him, pity for the father robbed of the love of his son, who felt an open shame of him—the good man twisted about from the fire and said: "Listen, and you shall hear what your father has done for you."

And then, with a brave show of composure, though many a time his old face twitched and his voice faltered, and under his bleared spectacles his eyes blinked, he told Michael Sunlocks the story of his infancy—how his father, a rude man, little used to ways of tenderness, had nursed him when his mother, being drunken and without natural feelings, had neglected him; how his father had tried to carry him away and failed for want of the license allowing them to go; how at length, in dread of what might come to the child, yet loving him fondly, he had concluded to kill him, and had taken him out to sea in the boat to do it, but could not compass it from terror of the voice that seemed to speak within him, and from pity of the child's own artless prattle; and, last of all, how his father had brought him there to that house, not abandoning him to the charity of others, but yielding him up reluctantly, and as one who

gave away in solemn trust the sole thing he held dear in all the world.

And pleading in this way for Stephen Orry, poor old Adam was tearing at his own heart wofully, little wishing that his words would prevail, yet urging them the more for the secret hope that, in spite of all, Michael Sunlocks, like the brave lad he was, would after all refuse to go. But Michael, who had listened impatiently at first, tramping the room to and fro, paused presently, and his eyes began to fill and his hands to tremble. So that when Adam, having ended, said: "Now, will you not go to Iceland?" thinking in his heart that the lad would fling his arms about him and cry: "No, no, never, never," and he himself would then answer: "My boy, my boy, you shall stay here, you shall stay here," Michael Sunlocks, his heart swelling and his eyes glistening with a great new pride and tenderness, said softly: "Yes, yes—for a father like that I would cross the world."

Adam Fairbrother said not a word more. He blew out the candle that shone on his face, sat down before the fire, and through three hours thereafter smoked in silence.

The next day, being Monday, Greeba was sent on to Lague, that her mother and brothers might see her after her long absence from the island. She was to stay there until the Monday following, that she might be at Ramsey to bid good-by to Michael Sunlocks on the eve of his departure for Iceland.

Three days more Michael spent at Government House, and on the morning of Friday, being fully ready and his leather trunk gone on before in care of Chalse A'Killey, who would suffer no one else to carry it, he was mounted for his journey on the little roan Goldie when up came the Governor astride his cob.

"I'l just set you as far as Ballasalla," he said, jauntily, and they rode away together.

All the week through since their sad talk on Easter Day old Adam had affected a wondrous cheerfulness, and now he laughed mightily as they rode along, and winked his gray eyes knowingly like a happy child's, until sometimes from one cause or other the big drops came into them. The morning was fresh and sweet, with the earth full of gladness and the air of song, though Michael Sunlocks was little touched by its beauty and thought it the heaviest he had yet seen. But Adam told how the spring was toward, and the lambs in fold, and the heifers thriving, and how the April rain would bring potatoes down to sixpence a kishen, and fetch up the grass in such a crop that the old island would rise—why not? ha, ha ha!—to the opulence and position of a State.

But, rattle on as he would, he could neither banish the heavy looks of Michael Sunlocks nor make light the weary heart he bore himself. So he began to rally the lad, and say how little he would have thought of a trip to Iceland in his old days at Guinea; that it was only a hop, skip, and a jump after all, and, bless his old soul, if he wouldn't cut across some day to see him between Tynwald and Midsummer—and many a true word was said in jest.

Soon they came by Rushen Abbey at Ballasalla, and then old Adam could hold back no longer what he had come to say.

"You'll see your father before you sail," he said, "and I'm thinking he'll give you a better reason for going than he has given to me; but, if not, and Bishop Petersen and the Latin School is all his end and intention, remember our good Manx saying that 'learning is fine clothes to the rich man, and riches to the poor one.' And that minds me," he said, plunging deep into his pocket, "of another good Manx saying, that 'there are just two bad pays—pay beforehand and no pay at all'; so to save you from both, who have earned yourself neither, put you this old paper into your fob—and God bless ye!"

So saying, he thrust into the lad's hand a roll of fifty Manx pound notes, and then seemed about to whip away. But Michael Sunlocks had him by the sleeve before he could turn his horse's head.

"Bless me yourself," the lad said.

And then Adam Fairbrother, with all his poor bankrupt whimsies gone from his upturned face, now streaming wet, and with his white hair gently lifted by the soft morning breeze, rose in the saddle and laid his hand on Michael's drooping head and blessed him. And so they parted, not soon to meet again, or until many a strange chance had befallen both.

It was on the morning of the day following that Michael Sunlocks rode into Port-y-Vullin. If he could have remembered how he had left it, as an infant in his father's arms, perhaps the task he had set himself would have been an easier one. He was trying to crush down his shame, and it was very hard to do. He was thinking that go where he would he must henceforth bear his father's name.

Stephen Orry was waiting for him, having been there three days, not living in the little hut, but washing it, cleaning it, drying it, airing it, and kindling fires in it, that by such close labor of half a week it might be worthy that his son should cross its threshold for half an hour. He had never slept in it since he had nailed up

the door after the death of Liza Killey, and as an unblessed place it had been safe from the intrusion of others.

He saw Michael Sunlocks riding up, and raised his cap to him as he alighted, saying "Sir" to him, and bowing as he did so. There were deep scars on his face and head, his hands were scratched and discolored, his cheeks were furrowed with wrinkles, and about his whole person there was a strong odor of tobacco, tar, and bilge water.

"I shall not have aught to ask you here, sir," he said, in his broken English.

"Call me Michael," the lad answered, and then they went into the hut.

The place was not much more cheerful than of old, but still dark, damp, and ruinous; and Michael Sunlocks, at the thought that he himself had been born there, and that his mother had lived her shameful life and died her dishonored death there, found the gall again in his throat.

"I have something that I shall have to say to you," said Stephen Orry, "but I can not well speak English. Not all the years through I never shall have learn it." And then, as if by a sudden thought, he spoke six words in his native Icelandic, and glanced quickly into the face of Michael Sunlocks.

At the next instant the great rude fellow was crying like a child. He had seen that Michael understood him. And Michael, on his part, seemed at the sound of those words to find something melt at his heart, something fall from his eyes, something rise to his throat.

"Call me Michael," he said once more. "I am your son"; and then they talked together, Stephen Orry in the Icelandic, Michael Sunlocks in English.

"I've not been a good father to you, Michael, never coming to see you all these years. But I wanted you to grow up a better man than your father before you. A man may be bad, but he doesn't like his son to feel ashamed of him. And I was afraid to see it in your face, Michael. That's why I stayed away. But many a time I felt hungry after my little lad, that I loved so dear and nursed so long, like any mother might. And hearing of him sometimes, and how well he looked, and how tall he grew, maybe I didn't think the less about him for not coming down upon him to shame him."

"Stop, father, stop," said Michael Sunlocks.

"My son," said Stephen Orry, "you are going back to your father's country. It's nineteen years since he left it, and he hadn't

lived a good life there. You'll meet many a one your father knew, and, maybe, some your father did wrong by. He can't undo the bad work now. There's a sort of wrong-doing there's no mending once it's done, and that's the sort his was. It was against a woman. Some people seem to be sent into this world to be punished for the sins of others. Women are mostly that way, though there are those that are not; but she was one of them. It'll be made up to them in the other world; and if she has gone there she has taken some of my sins along with her own—if she had any, and I never heard tell of any. But if she is in this world still, perhaps it can be partly made up to her here. Only it is not for me to do it, seeing what has happened since. Michael, that's why you are going to my country now."

"Tell me everything," said Michael.

Then Stephen Orry, his deep voice breaking and his gray eyes burning with the slow fire that had lain nineteen years asleep at the bottom of them, told his son the story of his life—of Rachel and of her father and her father's curse, of what she had given up and suffered for him, and of how he had repaid her with neglect, with his mother's contempt, and with his own blow. Then of her threat and his flight and his coming to that island; of his meeting with Liza, of his base marriage with the woman and the evil days they spent together; of their child's birth and his own awful resolve in his wretchedness and despair; and then of the woman's death, wherein the Almighty God had surely turned to mercy what was meant for vengeance. All this he told and more than this, sparing himself not at all. And Michael listened with a bewildered sense of fear and shame, and love and sorrow, that may not be described, growing hot and cold by turns, rising from his seat and sinking back again, looking about the walls with a chill terror, as the scenes they had witnessed seemed to come back to them before his eyes, feeling at one moment a great horror of the man before him, and at the next a great pity, and then clutching his father's huge hands in his own nervous fingers.

"Now you know all," said Stephen Orry, "and why it is not for me to go back to her. There is another woman between us, God forgive me, and dead though she is, that woman will be there forever. But she, who is yonder, in my own country, if she is living, is my wife. And heaven pity her, she is where I left her—down, down, down among the dregs of life. She has no one to protect and none to help her. She is deserted for her father's sake, and despised for mine. Michael, will you go to her?"

The sudden question recalled the lad from a painful reverie.

He had been thinking of his own position, and that even his father's name, which an hour ago he had been ashamed to bear, was not his own to claim. But Stephen Orry had never once thought of this, or that the dead woman who stood between him and Rachel also stood between Rachel and her son.

"Promise me, promise me," he cried, seeing one thing only—that Michael was his son, that his son was as himself, and that the woman who was dead had been as a curse to both of them.

But Michael Sunlocks made him no answer.

"I've gone from bad to worse—I know that, Michael. I've done in cold blood what I'd have trembled at when she was by me. Maybe I was thinking sometimes of my boy even then, and saying to myself how some day he'd go back for me to my own country, when I had made the money to send him."

Michael trembled visibly.

"And how he'd look for her, and find her, and save her, if she was alive. And if she wasn't—if she was dead, poor girl, with all her troubles over, how he'd look for the child that was to come when I left her—my child, and hers—and find it where it would surely be, in want and dirt and misery, and then save it for its mother's sake and mine. Michael, will you go?"

But still Michael Sunlocks made him no answer.

"It's fourteen years since God spared your life to me; just fourteen years to-night, Michael. I remembered it, and that's why we are here now. When I brought you back in my arms *she* was there at my feet, lying dead, who had been my rod and punishment. Then I vowed, as I should answer to the Lord at the last day, that if *I* could not go back, *you* should."

Michael covered his face with his hands.

"My son, my son—Michael, my little Sunlocks, I want to keep my vow. Will you go?"

"Yes, yes," cried Michael, rising suddenly. His doubt and pride and shame were gone. He felt only a great tenderness now for the big rude man, who had sinned deeply and suffered much and found that all he could do alone would avail him nothing.

"Father, where is she?"

"I left her at Reykjavik, but I don't know where she is now."

"No matter, I will hunt the world over until I find her, and when I have found her I will be as a son to her, and she shall be as a mother to me."

"My boy, my boy," cried Stephen.

"If she should die, and we should never meet, I will hunt the

world over until I find her child, and when I have found it I will be as a brother to it for my father's sake."

"My son, my son," cried Stephen. And in the exultation of that moment, when he tried to speak but no words would come, and only his rugged cheeks glistened and his red eyes shone, it seemed to Stephen Orry that the burden of twenty heavy years had been lifted away.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GOING OF SUNLOCKS

It was then past noon. The Irish brig was in the harbor taking in Manx cloth and potatoes, a few cattle, and a drove of sheep. At the flow of the tide it was to go out into the bay and anchor there, waiting for the mails, and at nine o'clock it was to sail. In the meantime Michael was to arrange for his passage, and at half-past eight he was to meet his father on the quay.

But he had also to see Greeba, and that was not easy to do. The family at Lague had heard the great news of his going, and had secretly rejoiced at it, but they refused to see him there, even for the shortest leave-taking at the longest parting. And at the bare mention of the bargain that Greeba had made with him, to bid him farewell on the eve of his departure, all the Fairbrothers were up in arms. So he had been sorely put to it to devise a means of meeting Greeba, if he could do so without drawing suspicion down on her; for come what might of risk or danger to himself he meant to see her again before eve: he set foot on the ship. The expedient he could not hit on did not long elude a woman's wit, and Greeba found the way by which they were to meet.

A few of last year's heifers were grazing on Barrule and at nightfall somebody went up for them and brought them home. She would go that night, and return by the glen, so that at the bridge by the turn of the river and the low road to Lague, where it was quiet enough sometimes, she could meet anybody about dusk and nobody be the wiser. She contrived a means to tell Michael of this, and he was prompt to her appointment.

The day had been fair but close, with a sky that hung low, and with not a breath of wind, and in the evening when the mist came down from the mountain a fog came up from the sea, so that the air was empty and every noise went through it as if it had been a speaking-trumpet. Standing alone on the bridge under the quiet

elms, Michael could hear the rattle of chains and the whistling of horns, and by that he knew that the brig had dropped anchor in the bay. But he strained his ears for other sounds, and they came at last; the thud of the many feet of the heifers, the flapping of their tails, the cattle-call in a girl's clear voice, and the swish of a twig that she carried in her hand.

Greeba came along behing the cattle, swinging her body to a jaunty gait, her whole person radiant with health and happiness, her long gown, close at the back and loose over her bosom, showing well her tall lithe form and firm bearing. She wore no bonnet, but a white silk handkerchief was tied about her head, half covering her mouth, and leaving visible in the twilight only the tip of her nose, a curl of her hair, and her bright dark eyes, with their long bright lashes. She was singing to herself as she came up to the bridge, with an unconcerned and unconscious air. At sight of Michael she made a start and a little nervous cry, so that he thought, poor lad, not knowing the ways of women, that for all the pains she had been at to fetch him she had somehow not expected him to be there.

She looked him over from head to foot, and her eyes gleamed from the white kerchief.

"So you are going, after all," she said, and her voice seemed to him the sweetest music he had ever heard. "I never believed you would," she added.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know," she said, and laughed a little. "But I suppose there are girls enough in Iceland," and then she laughed outright. "Only they can't be of much account up there."

"But I've heard they are very fine girls," he answered; "and it's a fine country, too."

She tossed her head and laughed and swung her switch.

"Fine country! The idea! Fine company, fine people and a good time. That's what a girl wants if she's worth anything."

"Then I suppose you will go back to London some day," he said.

"That doesn't follow," she answered. "There's father, you see; and, oh, what a pity he can't live at Lague!"

"Do you like it so much?" he said.

"Like it?" she said, her eyes full of laughter. "Six big hungry brothers coming home three times a day and eating up everything in the house—it's delightful!"

She seemed to him magnificently beautiful.

"I dare say they'll spoil you before I come back," he said, "or somebody else will."

She gave him a deliberate glance from her dark eyes, and then threw back her head and laughed. He could see the heaving of her breast. She laughed again—a fresh, merry laugh—and then he tried to laugh too, thinking of the foolish thing he had said.

"But if there are plenty of girls up there," she said, slyly glancing under her long lashes, "and they're so very wonderful, maybe you'll be getting married before you come home again?"

"Maybe so," he said quietly, and looked vacantly aside.

There was a pause. Then a sharp snap or two broke the silence and recalled him to the maiden by his side. She was only breaking up the twig she had carried.

There was another pause, in which he could hear the rippling of the river and the leaping of a fish. The heifers were munching the grass by the roadside a little ahead.

"I must go now," she said coldly, "or they'll be out seeking me."

"I'll walk with you as far as Lague—it's dark," he said.

"No, no, you must not!" she cried, and fumbling the loose fold about her throat she turned to go.

But he laid hold of her arm.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Only think of my brothers. Your very life would be in danger."

"If all six of them were ranged across the other end of this bridge, and you had to walk the rest of the road alone, I would go through them," he said.

She saw the high lift of his neck and she smiled proudly. Then they walked on some distance. He was gazing at her in silence. There was a conscious delight of her beauty in the swing of her step and the untamed glance of her eyes.

"Since the country is so fine I suppose you'll stay a long while there?" she said in her sweetest tone.

"No longer than I must," he answered.

"Why not?"

"I don't know."

"But why not?" she said again, looking at him sidewise with a gleam of a smile.

He did not answer, and she laughed merrily.

"What a girl you are for laughing," he said. "It may be very laughable to you that I'm going away—"

"But isn't it to you? Eh?" she said, as fast as a flash of quicksilver.

He had no answer, so he tried to laugh also, and to take her hand at the same time. She was too quick for him, and swung half a pace aside. They were then at the gate of Lague, where long years before Stephen Orry first saw the light through the elms. A late rook was still cawing overhead; the heifers had gone on toward the courtyard.

"You must go now, so good-by," she said, softly.

"Greeba," he said.

"Well? Only speak lower," she whispered, coming closer. He could feel the warm glow of her body.

"Do you think, now, if I should be a long time away—years it may be, perhaps many years—we should ever forget each other, we two?"

"Forget? No, not to say forget, you know," she answered.

"But should we remember?"

"Remember? You silly, silly boy, if we should not forget how ever could we fail to remember?"

"Don't laugh at me, Greeba; and promise me one thing," and then he whispered in her ear.

She sprang away and laughed once more, and started to run down the path. But in three strides he had her again.

"That will not do for me, Greeba," he said, breathing fast. "Promise me that you will wait for me."

"Well," she said softly, her dark eyes full of merriment, "I'll promise that while you are away no one else shall spoil me. There! Good-by!"

She was tearing herself out of his hands.

"First give me a token," he said.

Daffodils lined the path, though in the dusk he could not see them. But she knew they were there, and stopped and plucked two, blew upon both, gave one to him, and put the other into the folds at her bosom.

"Good-by! Good-by!" she said in an under-breath.

"Good-by!" he answered.

She ran a few steps, but he could not let her go yet, and in an instant he sprang abreast of her. He threw one arm about her waist and the other about her neck, tipped up her chin, and kissed her on the lips. A gurgling laugh came up to him.

"Remember!" he whispered over the upturned face in the white kerchief.

At the next instant he was gone. Then, standing under the dark elms alone, she heard the porch door opening, a heavy foot treading on the gravel, and a deep voice saying:

"Here are the heifers home, but where's the little lass?"

It was her eldest brother, Asher, and she walked up to him and said quite calmly:

"Oh! what a bad hasp that gate has—it takes such a time to open and close."

. . . . . .

Michael Sunlocks reached the harbor at the time appointed. As he crossed the quay some fishermen were lounging there with pipes between their teeth. A few of them came up to him to bid him Godspeed in their queer way.

Stephen Orry was standing apart by the head of the harbor steps, and at the bottom of them his boat, a yawl, was lying moored. They got into it and Stephen sculled out of the harbor. It was still very thick over the town, but they could see the lights of the Irish brig in the bay. Outside the pier the air was fresher, and there was something of a swell on the water.

"The fog is lifting," said Stephen Orry. "There'll be a taste of a breeze before long."

He seemed as if he had something to say, but did not know how to begin. His eye caught the light on Point of Ayre.

"When are they to build the lighthouse?" he asked.

"After the spring tides," said Michael.

They were about midway between the pier and the brig when Stephen rested his scull under his arm and drew something from one of his pockets.

"This is the money," he said, and he held out a bag toward Michael Sunlocks.

"No," said Michael, and he drew quickly back.

There was a moment's silence, and then Michael added, more softly:

"I mean, father, that I have enough already. Mr. Fairbrother gave me some. It was fifty pounds."

Stephen Orry turned his head aside and looked over the dark water. Then he said:

"I suppose that was so that you wouldn't need to touch money same as mine."

Michael's heart smote him. "Father," he said, "how much is it?"

"A matter of two hundred pounds," said Stephen.

"How long has it taken you to earn—to get it?"

"Fourteen years."

"And have you been saving it up for me?"

"Ay."

"To take me to Iceland?"

"Ay."

"How much more have you?"

"Not a great deal."

"But how much?"

"I don't know—scarcely."

"Have you any more?"

Stephen made no answer.

"Have you any more, father?"

"No."

Michael Sunlocks felt his face flush deep in the darkness.

"Father," he said, and his voice broke, "we are parting, you and I, and we may not meet again soon; indeed, we may never meet again. I have made you a solemn promise. Will you not make me one?"

"What is it, sir?"

"That you will never, never try to get more by the same means."

"There'll be no occasion now."

"But will you promise me?"

"Ay."

"Then give me the money."

Stephen handed the bag to Michael.

"It's fourteen years of your life, is it not?"

"So to say."

"And now it's mine, isn't it, to do as I like with it?"

"No, sir, but to do as you ought with it."

"Then I ought to give it back to you. Come, take it. But wait! Remember your promise, father. Don't forget—I've bought every hour of your life that's left."

Father and son parted at the ship's side in silence, with throats too full for speech. Many small boats, pulled by men and boys, were lying about the ladder, and there was a good deal of shouting and swearing and noisy laughter there. Some of the boatmen recognized Michael Sunlocks and bellowed their farewells to him. *"Dy banne Jee oo?"*

"God bless you! God bless you!" they said, and then among themselves they seemed to discuss the reason of his going. "Well, what's it saying?" said one; "the crab that lies always in its hole is never fat."

The air had freshened, the swell of the sea had risen, and a sharp breeze was coming up from the east. Stephen Orry stepped to his mast, hoisted mainsail and mizzen, and stood out to sea. He had scarcely got clear away when he heard the brig weigh its

anchor and beat down behind him. They were making toward the Point of Ayre, and when they came by the light Stephen Orry slackened off, and watched the ship go by him in the darkness.

He felt as if that were the last he was ever to see of his son in this world. And he loved him with all the strength of his great broken, bleeding heart. At that thought the outcast man laid his head in his hands, where he sat crouching at the tiller, and sobbed. There were none to hear him there; he was alone; and the low moan of the sea came up through the night from where his son was sailing away.

How long he sat there he did not know; he was thinking of his past, of his bad life in Iceland, and his long expiation in the Isle of Man. In the multitude of his sensations it seemed impossible to his dazed mind to know which of these two had been the worst, or the most foolish. Together they had left him a wreck. In the one he had thrown away the wife who loved him, in the other he had given up the son whom he loved. What was left to him? Nothing. He was a waif, despised and downtrodden. He thought of what might have happened to him if the chances of life had been different, and in that first hour of his last bereavement all the softening influences of nineteen years, the uplooking and upworking, and the struggle toward atonement, were as much gone from him as if they had never been. Then he thought of the money, and told himself that it was not now that he lost his son for the first time; he had lost him fourteen years ago, when he parted with him to the Governor. Since then their relations had been reversed. His little Sunlocks was his little Sunlocks no longer. He felt humiliated, he felt hardened, and by a strange impulse, whereof he understood but little, he cursed in his heart his sufferings more than his sins. They had been useless, they had been wasted, and he had been a fool not to live for himself. But in that moment, when the devil seemed to make havoc of good and evil together, God himself was not doing nothing.

Stephen Orry was drifting with the tide, when all at once he became conscious of the lapping of the water on stones near at hand, and of a bright light shed over the sea. Then he saw he had drifted close to low ground off the Point of Ayre. He bore hard aport and beat out to sea again. Very soon the white waterway was behind him; nothing was visible save the dark hull of the vessel going off toward the north, and nothing audible save the cry of a few gulls that were fishing by the light of the flare. It had been the work of three minutes only, but in that time one vivid impression had fixed itself in Stephen's preoccupied mind. The end

of the old sandstone pier had been battered down by a recent storm; the box that once held the light had gone down with it, a pole had been thrust out at an angle from the overthrown stones, and from the end of this pole the light swung by a rope. No idea connected itself with this impression, which lay low down down behind other thoughts.

The fog had lifted, but the night was still very dark. Not a star was shining and no moon appeared. Yet Stephen's eye—the eye of a sailor accustomed to the darkness of the sea at night—could descry something that lay to the north. The Irish brig had disappeared. Yes, her sails were now gone. But out at sea—far out, half a league away—what black thing was there? Oh, it must be a cloud, that was all; and no doubt a storm was brewing. Yet no, it was looming larger and larger, and coming nearer and nearer. It was a sail. Stephen could see it plainly enough now against the leaden sky. It was a schooner; he could make out its two masts, with fore and aft sails. It was an Irish schooner; he could recognize its heavy hull and hollowed cutwater. It was tacking against wind and tide from the northeast; it was a Dublin schooner and was homeward bound from Iceland, having called at Whitehaven and now putting in at Ramsey.

Stephen Orry had been in the act of putting about when this object caught his eye, but now a strange thing occurred. All at once his late troubles lay back in his mind, and by a sort of unconscious mechanical habit of intellect he began to put familiar ideas together. This schooner that was coming from Iceland would be heavy laden; it would have whalebone, and eider down, and tallow. If it ran ashore and was wrecked some of this cargo might be taken by some one and sold for something to a French smuggler that lay outside the Chicken Rocks. That flare on the Point of Ayre was the only sea-light on this north coast of the island, and it hung by a rope from a pole. The land lay low about it, there was not a house on that sandy headland for miles on miles, and the night was very dark. All this came up to Stephen Orry's mind by no effort of will; he looked out of his dull eyes on the dull stretch of sea and sky, and the thoughts were there of themselves.

What power outside himself was at work with him? Did anything tell him that this was the great moment of his life—that his destiny hung on it—that the ordeal he had just gone through was as nothing to the ordeal that was yet before him? As he sat in his boat, peering into the darkness at the black shadow on the horizon, did any voice whisper in his ear: "Stephen Orry, on the ship that is yonder there is one who hates you and has sworn to slay you?

He is coming, he is coming, and he is flesh of your flesh? He is your own son, and Rachel's?"

Stephen Orry fetched his boat away to leeward, and in two minutes more he had run down the light on the Point of Ayre. The light fell into the water, and then all was dark. Stephen Orry steered on over the freshening sea, and then slackened off to wait and watch. All this time he had been sitting at the tiller, never having risen from it since he stepped his mast by the side of the brig. Now he got on his feet to shorten sail, for the wind was rising and he meant to drift by the mizzen. As he rose something fell with a clank to the boat's bottom from his lap or his pocket. It was the bag of money, which Michael Sunlocks had returned to him.

Stephen Orry stooped down to pick it up; and having it in his hand he dropped back like a man who has been dealt a blow. Then, indeed, a voice rang in his ears; he could hear it over the wind that was rising, the plash of the white breakers on the beach, and the low boom of the deep sea outside. "Remember your promise, father. I have bought every hour of your life that's left."

His heart seem to stand still. He looked around in the dull agony of fear that was new to him, turning his eyes first to the headland that showed faintly against the heavy sky, then to the pier where no light now shone, and then to the black cloud of sail that grew larger every instant. One minute passed—two—three. Meantime the black cloud of sail was drawing closer. There were living men aboard of that ship, and they were running on to their death. Yes, they were men, living men—men with wives who loved them, and children who climbed to their knees. But perhaps they had seen the light when it went down. Merciful heaven, let it be so—let it be so!

The soul of Stephen Orry was awake at length. Another minute he waited, another and another, and the black shadow came yet nearer. At her next tack the ship would run on the land, and already Stephen seemed to hear the grating of her keel over the rocks below the beach. He could bear the suspense no longer, and hoisted sail to bear down on the schooner and warn her. But the wind was strong by this time, driving hard off the sea and the tide ran faster than before.

Stephen Orry was now some thirty fathoms' space to the north of the broken pier, and at that point the current from across Maughold Head meets the current going across the Mull of Galloway. Laboring in the heavy sea he could barely fetch about, but when at last he got head out to sea he began to drive down on the

schooner at a furious speed. He tried to run close along by her on the weather side, but before he came within a hundred fathoms he saw that he was in the full race of the north current, and strong seaman though he was, he could not get near. Then he shouted, but the wind carried away his voice. He shouted again, but the schooner gave no sign. In the darkness the dark vessel scudded past him.

He was now like a man possessed. Fetching about, he ran in before the wind, thinking to pass the schooner on her tack. He passed her indeed: he was shot far beyond her, shouting as he went, but again his voice was drowned in the roar of the sea. He was almost atop of the breakers now, yet he fetched about once more, and shouted again and again and again. But the ship came on and on, and no one heard the wild voice, that rang out between the dark sea and sky like the cry of a strong swimmer in his last agony.

CHAPTER IX

THE COMING OF JASON

The schooner was the "Peveril," homeward bound from Reykjavik to Dublin, with a hundred tons of tallow, fifty bales of eider down, and fifty casks of cods' and sharks' oil. Leaving the Icelandic capital on the morning after Easter Day, with a fair wind, for the outer Hebrides, she had run through the North Channel by the middle of the week, and put into Whitehaven on the Friday. Next day she had stood out over the Irish Sea for the Isle of Man, intending to lie off at Ramsey for contraband rum. Her skipper and mate were both Englishmen, and her crew were all Irish, except two, a Manxman and an Icelander.

The Manxman was a grizzled old seadog, who had followed the Manx fisheries twenty years and smuggling twenty other years, and then turned seaman before the mast. His name was Davy Kerruish, and when folks asked if the Methodists had got hold of him that he had turned honest in his old age, he closed one rheumy yellow eye very knowingly, tipped one black thumb over his shoulder to where the Government cutters lay anchored outside, and said in a touching voice: "Aw, well, boy, I'm thinking Castle Rushen isn't no place for a poor man when he's gettin' anyways ould."

The Icelander was a brawny young fellow of about twenty, of great height and big muscles, and with long red hair. He had

shipped at Reykjavik, in the room of an Irishman who had died on the outward trip and been buried at sea off the Engy Island. He was not a favorite among the crew; he spoke English well, but was no good at a yarn in the forecastle; he was silent, gloomy, not too fond of work, and often the butt of his mates in many a lumbering jest that he did not seem to see. He had signed on the wharf on the morning the schooner sailed, and the only kit he had brought aboard was a rush cage with a canary. He hung the bird in the darkness above his bunk, and it was all but his sole companion. Now and again he spoke to old Kerruish, but hardly ever to the other men.

"Och, sollum and quiet lek," old Davy would say at the galley fire, "but none so simple at all. Aw no, no, no; and wonderful cur'ous about my own bit of an island yander."

The Icelander was Jason, son of Rachel and Stephen Orry.

There is not a more treacherous channel around the British Isles than that which lies between St. Bee's Head, the Mull of Galloway, and the Point of Ayre, for four strong currents meet and fight in that neck of the Irish Sea. With a stiff breeze on the port quarter, the "Percival" had been driven due west from Whitehaven on the heavy current from the Solway Frith, until she had met the current from the North Channel and then she had tacked down toward the Isle of Man. It was dark by that time, and the skipper had leaned over the starboard gangway until he had sighted the light on the Point of Ayre. Even then he had been puzzled, for the light was feebler than he remembered it.

"Can you make it out, Davy?" he had said to old Kerruish.

"Aw, yes, though; and plain as plain," said Davy; and then the skipper had gone below.

The Manxman had been at the helm, and Jason, who was on the same watch, had sidled up to him at intervals and held a conversation with him in snatches, of which this is the sum and substance.

"Is it the Isle of Man on the starboard bow, Davy?"

"I darn' say no, boy."

"Lived there long, Davy?"

"Aw, thirty years afore you were born, maybe."

"Ever known any of my countrymen on the island?"

"Just one, boy; just one."

"What was he?"

"A big chap, six feet six, if an inch, and ter'ble strong; and a fist at him like a sledge; and a rough enough divil, too, and ye darn' spit afore him; but quiet for all—aw, yes, wonderful quiet."

"Who was he, Davy?"

"A widda man these teens of years."

"But what was his name?"

"Paul?—no! Peter?—no! Chut, bless ye, it's clane gone at me; but it's one of the lot in the ould Book, any way."

"Was it Stephen?"

"By gough, yes, and a middlin' good guess too."

"Stephen what?"

"Stephen—shoo! it's gone at me again! What's that they're callin' the ould King that's going buryin' down Laxey way?"

"Orry?"

"Stephen Orry, it is, for sure. Then it's like you knew him, boy?"

"No—that is—no, no."

"No relations?"

"No. But is he still alive?"

"Aw, yes, though. It's unknownced to me that he's dead, anyway."

"Where is he living now?"

"Down Port Erin way, by the Sound, some place."

"Davy, do we put into the harbor at Ramsey?"

"Aw, divil a chance of that, boy, with sperrets comin' over the side quiet-like in the night, you know, eighteen-pence a gallon, and as much as you can drink for nothin'."

"How far do we lie outside?"

"Maybe a biscuit throw or two. We never useder lie farther, boy."

"That's nothing, Davy."

After that the watch had been changed, and then a strange thing happened. The day had been heavy and cold, with a sky that hung low over the sea, and a mist that reduced the visible globe to a circle of fifty fathoms wide. As the night had closed in the mist had lifted, and the wind had risen and some sheets of water had come combing over the weather quarter. The men had been turned up to stow the yards and bring the schooner to the wind, and when they had gone below they had been wet and miserable, chewing doggedly at the tobacco in their cheeks, and growling at the darkness of the forecastle, for the slush-lamp had not yet been lighted. And just then, above the muttered curses, the tramping of heavy boots, and the swish of oilskins that were being shaken to drain them, there arose the sweet song of a bird. It was Jason's canary, singing in the dark corner of his bunk a foot above his head, for on coming below the lad had thrown himself down

in his wet clothes. The growling came to an end, the shuffling of feet stopped, and the men paused a moment to listen, and then burst into peals of laughter. But the bird gave no heed either to their silence or their noise, but sang on with a full throat. And the men listened, and then laughed again, and then suddenly ceased to laugh. A match was struck and the slush-lamp began to gleam out over mahogany faces that looked at each other with eyes of awe. The men shook out their coats and hung them over the stanchions. Still the bird sang on. It was uncanny, this strange singing in the darkness. The men charged their cuddies, fired up, and crouched together as they smoked. Still the bird sang on.

"Och, it's the divil in the craythur," said one; "you go bail there's a storm brewin'. It's just ould Harry hisself rej'icing."

"Then by St. Patrick, I'll screw the neck of him," said another.

"Aisy, man, aisy," said old Davy; 'it's the lad's."

"The lad be ——" said the other, and up he jumped. Jason saw the man coming toward his bunk, and laid hold of the wrist of the arm that he stretched over it.

"Stop that," said Jason; but the lad was on his back, and in an instant the man had thrown his body on top of him, leaned over him and wrenched open the door of the cage. The song stopped; there was a short rustle of wings, a slight chirp-chirp, and then a moment's silence, followed by the man's light laugh as he drew back with the little yellow bird dangling by the neck from his black thumb and forefinger.

But before the great hulking fellow had twisted about to where his mates sat and smoked under the lamp, Jason had leaped from his bunk, stuck his fist into the ruffian's throat and pinned him against a beam.

"—— you," he cried, thrusting his face into the man's face; "shall I kill you after it?"

"Help! My God, help!" the man gurgled out, with Jason's knuckles ground hard into his windpipe.

The others were in no hurry to interfere, but they shambled up at length, and amid shouts and growls of "Let go," "Let go the hoult," and "God's sake, slack the grip," the two were parted. Then the man who had killed the bird went off, puffing and cursing between his chattering teeth, and his mates began to laugh at the big words that came from his weak stomach, while old Davy Kerruish went over to Jason to comfort him.

"Sarve him right, the craythur," said Davy. "He's half dead, but that's just half too much life in him yet, though. It's what I've tould them times on times. 'Lave him alone,' says I; 'the lad's

quiet, but he'll be coorse enough if he's bothered.' And my gough, boy, what a face at ye yander, when you were twissin' the handkercher at him! Aw, thinks I, he's the spittin picsher of the big widda man Orry—Stephen Orry—brimstone and vinegar, and gunpowder atop of a slow fire."

And it was just at that moment, as old Davy was laughing through his yellow eyes and broken teeth at young Jason, and the other men were laughing at Jason's adversary, and the dim forecastle under its spluttering slush-lamp echoed and rang with the uproar, that a wild voice came down from the deck—"Below there! All hands up! Breakers ahead!"

Now the moment when the watch had been changed had been the very moment when Stephen Orry had run down the lamp, so that neither by the Manxman who gave up the helm nor by the Irishman who took it had the light been missed when it fell into the sea. And the moment when Stephen Orry shouted to the schooner to warn it had been the moment when the muffled peals of laughter at the bird's strange song had come up from the watch below in the forecastle. The wind had whistled among the sheets, and the flying spray had smitten the men's faces, but though the mist had lifted, the sky had still hung low and dark, showing neither moon nor stars, nor any hint of the land that lay ahead. But straight for the land the vessel had been driving in the darkness, under the power of wind and tide. After a time the helmsman had sighted a solitary light close in on the lee bow. "Point of Ayre," he thought, and luffed off a little, intending to beat down the middle of the bay. It had been the light on the jetty at Ramsey; and the little town behind it, with its back to the sea, lay dark and asleep, for the night was then well worn toward midnight. After that the helmsman had sighted two stronger lights beyond. "Ramsey," he thought, and put his helm aport. But suddenly the man on the lookout had shouted, "Breakers ahead," and the cry had been sent down the forecastle.

In an instant all hands were on deck, amid the distraction and uproar, the shouting and blind groping of the cruel darkness. Against the dark sky the yet darker land could now be plainly seen, and a strong tide was driving the vessel on to it. The helm was put hard to starboard, and the schooner's head began to pay off toward the wind. Then all at once it was seen that right under the vessel's bow some black thing lay just above the level of the sea, with a fringe of white foam around it.

"Davy, what do you make of it?" shouted the skipper.

"Lord-a-massy, it's the Carick," screamed Davy.

"Let go the anchor," roared the skipper.

But it was too late even for that last refuge. At the next moment the schooner struck heavily; she was on the reef in Ramsey Bay, and pitching miserably with every heave of the sea.

The two bright lights that led the vessel to her ruin came from the two little bays that lie under Maughold Head. The light in Port-y-Vullin was in the hut of Stephen Orry, who had lit his lamp and placed it in the window when he went out to bid farewell to Michael Sunlocks, thinking no evil thereby to any man, but only that it would guide him home again when he should return in the boat. The light in Port Lague was from the cottage of three old net weavers, who had lived there without woman or girl, or chick or child, through more than forty years. Two of the three were brothers, Danny and Jemmy Kewley, both over seventy years old, and their housemate, who was ninety, and had been a companion of their father, was known as Juan McLady. Danny and Jemmy still worked at the looms year in and year out, every working hour of the day and night, and Juan, long past other labor, cooked and sewed and cleaned for them. All three had grown dim of sight, and now groped about like three old earthworms. Every year for five years past they had needed an extra candle to work by, so that eight tallow dips, made in their own iron mold, swung from the open roof rafters over the meshes on that night when the "Peveril" struck on the Carick.

It was supper-time, though old Danny and old Jemmy were still at the looms. Old Juan had washed out a bowl of potatoes, filled the pot with them, hung them on the chimney hook and stirred the peats. Then to make them boil the quicker he had gone out with the tongs to the side of the house for some dry gorse from the gorse heap. While there he had peered through the darkness of the bay for the light on the Point of Ayre, and had missed it, and on going back he had said:

"It's out again. That's the third time inside a month. I'll go bail something will happen yet."

He had got no answer, and so sat down on the three-legged stool to feed the fire with gorse lifted on the tongs. When the potatoes had boiled he had carried them to the door to drain them, and then, with the click-clack of the levers behind him, he had thought he heard, over the deep boom and plash of the sea in front, a voice like a cry. Going indoors he had said: "Plague on the water-bailiff and commissioners and kays and councils. I'll go bail there's smuggling going on under their very noses. I'd have the law on the lot of them, so I would."

Old Danny and old Jemmy knew the temper of their housemate—that he was never happy save when he had somebody to higgle with—so they paid no heed to his mutterings. But when Juan, having set the potatoes to steam with a rag spread over them, went out for the salt herrings, to where they hung to dry on a stick against the sunny side of the porch, he was sure that above the click of the levers, the boom and plash of the sea, and the whistle of the wind, he could hear a clamorous shout of many voices, like a wild cry of distress. Then he hobbled back with a wizened face of deadly pallor and told what he had heard, and the shuttles were stopped, and there was silence in the little house.

"It went by me same as the wind," said old Juan.

"Maybe it was the nightman," said old Danny.

At that old Jemmy nodded his head very gravely, and old Juan held on to the lever handles; and through those precious minutes when the crew of the schooner were fighting in the grip of death in the darkness, these three old men, their nearest fellow creatures, half dead, half blind, were held in the grip of superstitious fears.

"There again," cried old Juan; and through the door that he had left open the cry came in above roar of wind and sea.

"It's men that's yander," said old Jemmy.

"Ay," said old Danny.

"Maybe it's a ship on the Carick," said old Juan.

"Let's away and look," said old Jemmy.

And then the three helpless old men, trembling and affrighted, straining their dim eyes to see and their deaf ears to hear, and clinging to each other's hands like little children, groped their slow way to the beach. Down there the cries were louder than they had been on the brows above.

"Mercy me, let's away to Lague for the boys," said old Juan; and leaving behind them the voices that cried for help, the old men trudged and stumbled through the dark lanes.

Lague was asleep, but the old men knocked, and the windows were opened and night-capped heads thrust through. Very soon the house and courtyard echoed with many footsteps, and the bell over the porch rang out through the night, to call up the neighbors far and near.

Ross and Stean and Thurstan were the first to reach the shore, and there they found the crew of the "Peveril" landed—every man safe and sound, but drenching wet with the water they had passed through to save their lives. The schooner was still on the Carick, much injured already, plunging with every hurling sea on to the sharp teeth of the shoal beneath her, and going to pieces fast.

And now that help seemed to be no more needed the people came flocking down in crowds—the Fairbrothers, with Greeba, and all their men and maids, Kane Wade, the Methodist, with Chalse A'Killey, who had been sleeping the night at his house, Nary Crowe, and Matt Mylechreest and old Coobragh. And while Davy Kerruish shook the salt water from his sou'wester, and growled out to them with an oath that they had been a plaguy long time coming, and the skipper bemoaned the loss of his ship, and the men of their kits, Chalse was down on his knees on the beach, lifting up his crazy, cracked voice in loud thanksgiving. At that the growling ended, and then Asher Fairbrother, who had been the last to come, invited the ship-broken men to Lague, and all together they turned to follow him.

Just at that moment a cry was heard above the tumult of the sea. It was a wild shriek that seemed to echo in the lowering dome of the sky. Greeba was the first to hear it.

"There was some one left on the ship!" she cried.

The men stopped and looked into each other's faces one by one.

"No," said the skipper, "we're all here."'

The cry was heard once more; it was a voice of fearful agony.

"That's from Port-y-Vullin," said Asher Fairbrother: and to Port-y-Vullin they all hastened off, following the way of the beach. There it was easy to see from whence the cries had come. An open fishing boat was laboring in the heavy sea, her stern half prancing like an unbroken horse, and her forepart jammed between two horns of the rock that forks out into the sea from Maughold Head. She had clearly been making for the little bay, when she had fallen foul of the shoal that lies to the north of it. Dark as the night was, the sea and sky were lighter than the black headland, and the figure of a man in the boat could be seen very plainly. on goñs trying to unship the mast, that he might lighten the little

"It's o[illegible]ase her off the horns that held her like a vise, but every bail something[illegible]ve her head deeper into the cleft, and at each vain

He had got n[illegible]ain and again in rage and fear.

stool to feed the fire[illegible]igh and dry on the shore. Two of the Fair-potatoes had boiled he ha[illegible]stan, ran it into the water, jumped into and then, with the click-[illegible]he tide was still making, the sea was thought he heard, over the[illegible]swell was scooping up the shingle and front, a voice like a cry. G[illegible] sleet, and in an instant the boat was the water-bailiff and commiss[illegible]e, man," shouted many voices.

go bail there's smuggling going[illegible], help!" She seemed to be beside have the law on the lot of them, [illegible]e fear, beyond the thought of a

man's life in peril, seemed to possess her. Did she know what it was? She did not. She dared not fix her mind upon it. She was afraid of her own fear. But, low down within her, and ready at any moment to leap to her throat, was the dim ghost of a dread that he who was in the boat, and in danger of his life on the rock, might be very near and dear to her. With her hood fallen back from her head to her shoulders, she ran to and fro among the men on the beach, crying: "He will be lost. Will no one save him?"

But the other women clung to the men, and the men shook their heads and answered: "He's past saving," and "We've got wives and childers lookin' to us, miss—and what's the use of throwing your life away?"

Still the girl cried "Help," and then a young fellow pushed through to where she stood, and said: "He's too near for us to stand here and see him die."

"Oh, God bless and keep you forever and ever," cried Greeba; and, lifted completely out of all self-control, she threw her arms about the young man and kissed him fervently on the cheek. It was Jason. He had found a rope and coiled one end of it about his waist, and held the other end in his hand. The touch of Greeba's quivering lips had been as fire to him. "Lay hold," he cried, and threw the loose end of the rope to Thurstan Fairbrother. At the next moment he was breast-high in the sea. The man must have seen him coming, for the loud clamor ceased.

"Brave lad!" said Greeba, in a deep whisper.

"Brave is it? It's mad, I'm calling it," said old Davy.

"Who is it?" said the skipper.

"The young Icelander," said Davy.

"Not the lad Jason?—"

"Aw, yes, though—Jason—the gawk, as they're saying. Poor lad, *there's* a heart at him."

The people held their breath. Greeba covered her eyes with her hands, and felt an impulse to scream. Wading with strong strides, and swimming with yet stronger strokes, Jason reached the boat. A few minutes afterward he was back on the shore, dragging the man after him.

The man lay insensible in Jason's arms, bleeding from a wound in the head. Greeba stooped quickly to peer into his face in the darkness, and then rose up and turned away with a sigh that was like a sigh of relief.

"He's done for," said Jason, putting him down.

"Who is he?" cried a score of voices.

"God knows; fetch a lantern," said Jason.

"See, there's a light in old Orry's hut yonder. Let's away there with him. It will be the nearest place," said Kane Wade.

Then shoulder-high they raised the insensible man and carried him to Stephen Orry's hut.

"What a weight he is!" said Kane Wade. "Slip along, somebody, and get the door opened."

Chalse A'Killey ran on ahead.

"Where's Stephen, to-night, that he's not out with us at work same as this?" said Matt Mylechreest.

"He's been down here all week," puffed Nary Crowe.

In another minute Chalse was knocking at the door, and calling loudly as he knocked:

"Stephen! Stephen! Stephen Orry!"

There came no answer, and he knocked again and called yet louder:

"Stephen, let us in. There's a man here dying."

But no one stirred within the house. "He's asleep," said one.

"Stephen—Stephen Orry—Stephen Orry—wake up, man—can't you hear us? Have you no bowels, that you'd keep the man out?"

"He's not at home—force the door," Kane Wade shouted.

One blow was enough. The door was fastened only by a hemp rope wound around a hasp on the outside, and it fell open with a crash. Then the men with the burden staggered into the house. They laid the insensible man on the floor, and there the light of the lamp that burned in the window fell upon his face.

"Lord-a-massy!" they cried, "it's Stephen Orry hisself."

CHAPTER X

THE END OF ORRY

When the tumult was over, and all lives appeared to be saved, and nothing seemed lost save the two vessels—the schooner and the yawl, which still rose and fell on the Carick and the forked reef of the head—and the people separated, and the three old net weavers straggled back to their home, the crew of the "Peveril" went off with the Fairbrothers to Lague. Great preparations were already afoot there, for Asher had sent on a message ahead of them, and the maids were bustling about, the fire was rekindled in the kitchen, and the kettle was singing merrily. And first there was a mouthful of grog, steaming hot, for every drenched and dripping seaman, with a taste of toast to sweeten it. Then there

was getting all the men into a change of dry clothes in order that they might wait for a bite of supper, and until beds were shuffled about and shake-downs fetched out. And high was the sport and great the laughter at the queer shifts the house was put to that it might find clean rigging for so many, on even so short a cruise. When the six Fairbrothers had lent all the change they had of breeches and shirts, the maids had to fish out from their trunks a few petticoats and some gowns, for the sailors still unfurnished. But the full kit was furnished out at length, and when the ship's company mustered down in the kitchen from the rooms above, all in their motley color and queer mixture of garments, with their grizzled faces wiped dry, but their hair still wet and lank and glistening, no one could have guessed, from the loud laughter wherewith they looked each other over, that only an hour before Death itself so nearly tricked them. Like noisy children let out of school they all were, now that they were snugly housed; for a seagoing man, however he may be kicked about on the sea, is not used to be downhearted on the land. And if two or three of the company continued to complain of their misfortunes, their growlings but lent zest to the merriment of the rest. So that they laughed loud when old Davy, cutting a most ridiculous figure in a linsey-woolsey petticoat and a linen bodice that would not meet over his hairy chest, began to grumble that he had followed the sea forty years and never been wrecked before, as if that were the best of all reasons why he should not come by such rough harm now, and a base advantage taken of him by Providence in his old age.

And louder still they laughed at the skipper himself when still sorely troubled by his evil luck, he wanted to know what all their thanking God was for, since his good ship lay a rotten hulk on a cruel reef; and if it was so very good of Providence to let them off that rock, it would have been better far not to let them on to it. And loudest of all they laughed, and laughed again, when an Irish sailor told them, with all his wealth of brogue, of a prayer that he had overheard old Davy pray while they hung helpless on the rock, thinking never to escape from it. "Oh, Lord, only save my life this once, and I'll smuggle no more," the Manxman had cried: "and it's not for myself but ould Betty I ax it, for Thou knowest she's ten years dead in Maughold churchyard with twenty rolls of good Scotch cloth in the grave atop of her. But I had nowhere else to put it, and, good Lord, only remember the last day, and save my life till I dig it up from off of her chest, for she was never a powerful woman."

And the danger being over, neither Davy nor the skipper took it ill that the men should make sport of their groanings, for they laughed with the rest, and together they waked a most reckless uproar.

All this while, though Mrs. Fairbrother had not left her bedroom, the girls' feet had been jigging about merrily over the white holy-stoned floor to get some supper spread, and Greeba, having tapped Jason on the shoulder, had carried him off quietly to the door of the parlor, and pushed him in there while she ran to get a light, for the room was dark. It was also cool, with crocks of milk standing for cream, and basins of eggs and baskets of new-made cheese. And when she returned with the candle in one hand, shaded by the luminous fingers of the other, and its bright light on her comely face, she would have loaded him with every good thing the house contained—collared head, and beef, and binjeen and Manx jough, and the back of the day's pudding. Nothing he would have, however, save one thing, and that made great sport between them: for it was an egg, and he ate it raw, shell included, crunching it like an apple. At that sight she made pretence to shudder. And then she laughed like a bell, saying he was a wild man indeed, and she had thought so when she first set eyes on him on the shore, and already she was more than half afraid of him.

Then they laughed again, she very slyly, he very bashfully, and while her bright eyes shone upon him she told him how like he was, now that she saw him in the light, to some one else she knew of. He asked her who that was, and she answered warily, with something between a smile and a blush, that it was one who had left the island that very night.

By this time the clatter of dishes mingled with the laughter and merry voices that came from the other side of the hall, and the two went back to the kitchen.

Asher Fairbrother, who had been dozing like a sheep dog in the ingle, was then rising to his feet, and saying: "And now for supper; and let it be country fashion, girls, at this early hour of the morning."'

Country fashion indeed it was, with the long oak table scrubbed white like a butcher's board, and three pyramids of potatoes, boiled in their jackets, tossed out at its head and foot and middle, three huge blocks of salt, each with its wooden spoon, laid down at the same spaces, and a plate with a boiled herring and a basin of last night's milk before every guest. And the seamen shambled into their places, any man anywhere, all growling or laughing, or both; and the maids flipped about very lightly, rueing nothing, amid so

many fresh men's faces, of the strange chance that had fetched them out of their beds for work at double tides.

And seeing the two coming back together from the parlor, the banter of the seamen took another turn, leaving old Davy for young Jason, who was reminded of the kiss he had earned on the beach, and asked if ever before a sailor lad had got the like from a lady without look or longing. Such was the flow of their banter until Greeba, being abashed, and too hard set to control the rich color that mounted to her cheeks, fled laughing from the room to hide her confusion.

But no rudeness was intended by the rude seadogs, and no offense was taken; for in that first hour, after they had all been face to face with death, the barrier of manners stood for nothing to master or man or mistress or maid.

But when the rough jest seemed to have gone far enough, and Jason, who had laughed at first, had begun to hang his head—sitting just where Stephen Orry had sat when, long years before, he took refuge in that house from the four blue-jackets in pursuit of him—Old Davy Kerruish got up and pulled his grizzled forelock, and shouted to him above the tumult of the rest:

"Never mind the loblolly-boys, lad," he cried, "it's just jealous they are, being so long out of practice; and there's one thing you can say, anyway, and that's this—the first thing you did on setting foot in the Isle of Man was to save the life of a Manxman."

"Then here's to his right good health," cried Asher Fairbrother, with his mouth in a basin of milk; and in that brave liquor, with three times three and the thud and thung of twenty hard fists on the table, the rough toast was called round.

And in the midst of it, when Greeba, having conquered her maiden shame, had crept back to the kitchen, and Mrs. Fairbrother, aroused at length by the lightsome hubbub, had come down to put an end to it, the door of the porch opened, and crazy old Chalse A'Killey stood upon the threshold, very pale, panting for breath, and with a ghastly light in his sunken eyes, and cried: "He's dying. Where's the young man that fetched him ashore? He's crying out for him, and I'm to fetch him along with me straight away."

Jason rose instantly. "I'll go," he said, and he snatched up a cap.

"And I'll go with you," said Greeba, and she caught up a shawl.

Not a word more was said, and at the next instant, before the others had recovered from their surprise, or the laughter and shouting were yet quite gone from their lips, the door had closed again and the three were gone.

Chalse, in his eagerness to be back, strode on some paces ahead in the darkness, and Jason and Greeba walked together.

"Who is it?" said Jason. "Do you know?"'

"No," said Greeba. "Chalse!" she cried, but the old man, with his face down, trudged along as one who heard nothing. She tripped up to him, and Jason walking behind heard the sound of muttered words between them, but caught nothing of what passed. Dropping back to Jason's side, the girl said: "It's a man whom nobody holds of much account, poor soul."

"What is he?" said Jason.

"A smuggler, people say, or perhaps worse. His wife has been long years dead, and he has lived alone ever since, shunned by most folks, and by his own son among others. It was his son who sailed to Iceland to-night."

"Iceland? Did you say Iceland?"

"Yes, Iceland. It is your own country, is it not? But he hadn't lived with his father since he was a child. He was brought up by my own dear father. It was he who seemed to be so like to you."

Jason stopped suddenly in the dark lane.

"What's the name?" he asked, hoarsely.

"The son's name? Michael."

"Michael what?"

"Michael Sunlocks."

Jason drew a long breath, and strode on without a word more. Very soon they were outside the little house in Port-y-Vullin.

Chalse was there before them, and he stood with the door ajar.

"Whist!" the old man whispered. "He's ebbing fast. He's going out with the tide. Listen!"

They crept in on tiptoe, but there was small need for quiet. The place was a scene of direful uproar and most gruesome spectacle. It was all but as thronged of people as it had been nineteen years before, on the day of Liza Killey's wedding. On the table, the form, the three-legged stool, and in the chimney corner, they sat together cheek-by-jowl, with eyes full of awe, most of them silent or speaking low behind their hands. On the bed the injured man lay and tossed in a strong delirium. The wet clothes wherein he had passed through the sea had been torn off, his body wrapped in a gray blanket, and the wound on his head bandaged with a cloth. His lips were discolored, his cheeks were white, and his hair was damp with the sweat that ran in big drops to his face and neck. At his feet Nary Crowe stood, holding a horn cup of brandy, and by his head knelt Kane Wade, the Methodist, praying in a loud voice.

"God bring him to Thy repentance," cried Kane Wade; "restore him to the joy of Thy salvation. The pains of hell have gotten hold of him. Hark how the devil is tearing him. He is like to the man with the unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs. The devil is gotten into him. But out wi' thee, Satan, and no more two words about it! Thanks be unto God, we can wrestle with thee in prayer. Gloom at us, Satan, but never will we rise from our knees until God hath given us the victory over thee, lest our brother fall into the jaws of hell, and our own souls be not free from bloodguiltiness."

In this strain he prayed, shouting at the full pitch of the vast bellows of his lungs, and loudest of all when the delirium of the sick man was strongest, until his voice failed him from sheer exhaustion, and then his lips still moved, and he mumbled hoarsely beneath his breath.

Jason stood in the middle of the floor and looked on in his great stature over the heads of the people about him, while Greeba, with quiet grace and gentle manners, thinned the little hut of some of the many with whom the dense air smoked and reeked. After that she lifted the poor restless, tumbling, wet head from its hard pillow, and put it to rest on her own soft arm, with her cool palm to the throbbing brow, and then she damped the lips with the brandy from Nary Crowe's cup. This she did, and more than this, seeming to cast away from her in a moment all her lightness, her playfulness, her bounding happy spirits, and in the hour of need to find such tender offices come to her, as to all true women, like another sense.

And presently the delirium abated, the weary head lay still, the bleared eyes opened, the discolored lips parted, and the dying man tried to speak. But before ever a word could come, the change was seen by Kane Wade, who cried: "Thank God, he has found peace. Thank the Lord, who has given us the victory. Satan is driven out of him. Mercy there is for the vilest of sinners." And on the top of that wild shout old Chalse struck up, without warning, and in the craziest screech that ever came from human throat, a rugged hymn of triumph, wherein all the lines were one line and all the notes one note, but telling how the Lord was King over death and hell and all the devils.

Again and again he sang a verse of it, going faster at every repetition, and the others joined him, struggling to keep pace with him: and all but Greeba, who tried by vain motions to stop the tumult, and Jason, who looked down at the strange scene with eyes full of wonder. At last the mad chorus of praise came to an

end, and the sick man said, casting his weak eyes into the faces about him, "Has he come?"

"He is here," whispered Greeba, and she motioned to Jason.

The lad pushed through to the bedside, and then for the first time he came face to face with Stephen Orry.

Did any voice, unheard of the others, cry in his ear at that moment, "Jason, Jason, this is he whom you have crossed the seas to slay, and he has sent for you to bless you, for the last sands of his life are running out"?

"Leave us alone together," said Stephen Orry; and Greeba, after beating out his pillow and settling his head on it, was about to move away, when he whispered: "Not you," and held her back.

Then with one accord the others called on him not to tarry over carnal thoughts, for his soul was passing through dark waters, and he should never take rest until he had cast anchor after a troublous voyage.

"Get religion," cried Kane Wade. "Lay hoult of a free salvation," cried old Chalse. "All flesh is as grass," cried Matt Mylechreest. "Pray without ceasing," they all cried together, with much besides in the same wild strain.

"I can not pray," the sick man muttered.

"Then we'll pray for you, mate," shouted Kane Wade.

"Ah, pray, pray, pray," mumbled Stephen Orry, "but it's no good; it's too late, too late."

"Now is the 'pointed time," shouted Kane Wade. "The Lord can save to the uttermost the worst sinner of us all."

"If I'm a sinner, let me not be a coward in my sins," said Stephen Orry. "Have pity on me and leave me."

But Kane Wade went on to tell the story of his own conversion: It was on a Saturday night of the mackerel season down at Kinsale. The conviction had been borne in upon him that if he did not hear the pardoning voice before the clock struck twelve, he would be damned to all eternity. When the clock began to warn for midnight the hair of his flesh stood up, for he was still unsaved. But before it had finished striking the Saviour was his, and he was rejoicing in a blessed salvation.

"How can you torture a poor dying man?" muttered Stephen Orry.

"Call on the Lord, mate," shouted Kane Wade, "'Lord, I belave; help Thou my unbelafe.'"

"I've something to do, and the pains of death have hold of me," muttered Stephen Orry.

"He parthoned the thafe on the cross," cried old Chalse, "and he's gotten parthon left for you."

"Cruel, cruel! Have you no pity for a wretched dying man?" mumbled Stephen Orry.

"Ye've not lived a right life, brother," cried Kane Wade, "and ye've been ever wake in yer intellects, so never take rest till ye've read your title clear."

"You would scarce think they could have the heart, these people—you would scarce think it, would you?" said Stephen Orry, lifting his poor glassy eyes to Greeba's face.

Then with the same quiet grace as before, the girl got up, and gently pushed the men out of the house one by one. "Come back in an hour," she whispered.

It was a gruesome spectacle—the rude Methodists, with their loud voices and hot faces and eyes of flame, trying to do their duty by the soul of their fellow creature; the poor tortured sinner, who knew he had lived an evil life and saw no hope of pardon, and would not be so much a coward as to cry for mercy in his last hours; the young Icelander looking on in silence and surprise: and the girl moving hither and thither among them all, like a soft-voiced dove in a cage of hoarse jackdaws.

But when the little house was clear, and the Methodists, who started a hymn on the beach outside, had gone at last, and their singing had faded away, and there was only the low wail of the ebbing tide where there had been so loud a Babel of many tongues, Stephen Orry raised himself feebly on his elbow and asked for his coat. Jason found it on the hearth and lifted it up, still damp and stiff, from the puddle of water that lay under it. Then Stephen Orry told him to put his hands in the breast pocket and take out what he would find there. Jason did as he was bidden and drew forth the bag of money. "Here it is," he said; "what shall I do with it?"

"It is yours," said Stephen Orry.

"Mine?" said Jason.

"I meant it for my son," said Stephen Orry. He spoke in his broken English, but let us take the words of his mouth. "It's yours now, my lad. Fourteen years I've been gathering it, meaning it for my son. Little I thought to part with it to a stranger, but it's yours, for you've earned it."

"No, no," said Jason. "I've earned nothing."

"You tried to save my life," said Stephen Orry.

"I couldn't help doing that," said Jason, "and I want no pay."

"But it's two hundred pounds, my lad."

"No matter."

"Then how much have you got?"

"Nothing."

"Has the wreck taken all?"

"Yes—no—that is, I never had anything."

"Take the money; for God's sake, take it, and do what you like with it, or I'll die in torture," cried Stephen Orry, and with a groan he threw himself backward on the bed.

"I'll keep it for your son," said Jason. "His name is Michael Sunlocks, isn't it? And he has sailed for Iceland, hasn't he? That's my country, and I may meet him some day."

Then in a broken voice Stephen Orry said: "If you have a father he must be proud of you, my lad. Who is he?"

And Jason answered moodily, "I have no father—none I ever knew."

"Did he die in your childhood?"

"No."

"Before you were born?"

"No."

"Is he alive?"

"Ay, for aught I know."

Stephen Orry struggled to his elbow again. "Then he had wronged your mother?" he said, with his breath coming quick.

"Ay, maybe so."

"The villain! Yet who am I to rail at him? Is your mother still alive?"

"No."

"Where is your father?"

"Don't speak of him," said Jason in an under-breath.

"But what's your name, my lad?"

"Jason."

With a long sigh of relief Stephen Orry dropped back and muttered to himself: "To think that such a father should never have known he had such a son."

The power of life ebbed fast in him, but after a pause he said:

"My lad."

"Well?" said Jason.

"I've done you a great wrong."

"When did you do me a wrong?"

"To-night."

"How?"

"No matter. There's no undoing it now; God forgive me. But

let me be your father, though I'm a dying man, for that will give you the right to keep my poor savings for yourself."

"But they belong to your son," said Jason.

"He'll never touch them," said Stephen Orry.

"Why not?" said Jason.

"Don't ask me. Leave me alone. For mercy's sake don't torture a dying man," cried Stephen Orry.

"That's not what I meant to do," said Jason, giving way; "and, if you wish it, I will keep the money."

"Thank God," said Stephen Orry.

Some moments thereafter he lay quiet, breathing fast and loud, while Greeba hovered about him. Then, in a feebler voice, he said: "Do you think, my lad, you'll ever meet my son?"

"Maybe so," said Jason. "I'll go back when I've done what I came to do."

"What is that?" Greeba whispered, but he went on without answering her.

"Though our country is big, our people are few. Where will he be?"

"I scarce can say. He has gone to look for some one. He's a noble boy, I can tell you that. And it's something for a father to think of when his time comes, isn't it? He loves his father, too—that is, he did love me when he was a little chap. You must know he had no mother. Only think, I did everything for him, though I was a rough fellow. Yes, I nursed him and comforted him as any woman might. Ay, and the little man loved me then, for all he doesn't bear his father's name now."

Jason glanced up inquiringly, first at Stephen Orry and then at Greeba. Stephen saw nothing. His eyes were dim, but full of tenderness, and his deep voice was very gentle, and he rambled on with many a break and between many a groan, for the power of life was low in him.

"You see I called him Sunlocks. That was because it was kind and close-like. He used to ride on my shoulder. We played together then, having no one else, and I was everything to him and he was all the world to me. Ah, that was long ago, Sunlocks! Little Sunlocks! My little Sunlocks! My own little—"

At that point he laughed a little, and then seemed to weep like a child, though no tears came to his eyes, and the next moment, under the pain of joyful memories and the flow of blood upon the brain, his mind began to wander. It was very pitiful to look upon. His eyes were open, but it was clear that they did not see; his utterance grew thick and his words were confused and foolish; but

his face was lit up with a surprising joy, and you knew that the years had rolled back, and the great rude fellow was alone with his boy, and doting on him. Sometimes he would seem to listen as if for the child's answer, and then he would laugh as if at its artless prattle. Again he would seem to sing the little one to sleep, crooning very low a broken stave that ran a bar and then stopped. Again he would say very slowly what sounded like the words of some baby prayer, and while he did so his chin would be twisted into his breast and his arms would struggle to cross it, as though the child itself were once more back in his bosom.

At all this Greeba cried behind her hands, unable to look or listen any longer, and Jason, though he shed no tears, said, in a husky voice: "He can not be altogether bad who loved his son so."

The delirium grew stronger, the look of joy, and the tender words gave place to glances of fear and some quick beseeching, and then Jason said in a tremulous whisper: "It must be something to know you have a father who loves you like that."

But hardly had the words been spoken when he threw back his head and asked in a firm voice how far it was to Port Erin.

"About thirty miles," said Greeba, looking up at the sudden question.

"Not more?" asked Jason.

"No. *He* has lived there," she answered, with a motion of her head downward toward the bed.

"He?"

"Yes, ever since his wife died. Before that they lived in this place with Michael Sunlocks. His wife met with a terrible death."

"How?"

"She was murdered by some enemy of her husband. The man escaped, but left his name behind him. It was Patricksen."

"Patricksen?"

"Yes. That must be fourteen years ago, and since then he has lived alone at Port Erin. Do you wish to go there?"

"Ay—that is, so I intended."

"Why?"

"To look for some one."

"Who is it?"

"My father."

For a moment Greeba was silent, and then she said with her eyes down:

"Why look for *him* if he wronged your mother?"

"That's why I meant to do so."

She looked up into his face, and stammered, "But why?"

He did not appear to hear her: his eyes were fixed on the man on the bed; and hardly had she asked the question when she covered her ears with her hands as though to shut out his answer.

"Was *that* why you came?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered. "If we had not been wrecked to-night I should have dropped overboard and deserted."

"Strange," she said. "It was just what *he* did, when he came to the island nineteen years ago."

"Yes, nineteen years ago," Jason repeated.

He spoke like a man in a sleep, and she began to tremble.

"What is the matter?" she said.

Within a few minutes his face had suddenly changed, and it was now awful to look upon. Not for an instant did he turn his eyes from the bed.

The delirium of the sick man had deepened by this time; the little, foolish, baby play-words in the poor broken English came from him no more, but he seemed to ask eager questions, in a tongue that Greeba did not understand.

"This man is an Icelander," said Jason.

"Didn't you know that before?" said Greeba.

"What is his name?" said Jason.

"Haven't you heard it yet?"

"What is his name?"

Then for one quick instant he turned his face toward her face, and she seemed to read his thought.

"Oh God!" she cried, and she staggered back.

Just then there was the sound of footsteps on the shingle outside, and at the next moment Stean and Thurstan Fairbrother and old Davy Kerruish pushed open the door. They had come to fetch Greeba.

"The Methodee man tould us," said Davy, standing by Jason's side, "and, my gough, but it's mortal cur'ous. What's it saying, 'Talk of the devil, and sure enough it was the big widda man hisself we were talking of, less nor a half hour afore we struck.' "

"Come, my lass," said Thurstan.

"No, no, I'll stay here," said Greeba.

"But your mother is fidgeting, and this is no place for a slip of of a girl—come!"

"I'll stay with him alone," said Jason.

"No, no," cried Greeba.

"It's the lad's right, for all," said old Davy. "He fetched the poor chap out of the water. Come, let's take the road for it."

"Will no one stay instead of me?" said Greeba.

"Where's the use," said Davy. "He's really past help. He's outward bound, poor chap. Poor Orry! Poor ould Stephen!"

Then they drew Greeba away, and with a look of fear fixed on Jason's face she passed out at the door.

Jason was now alone with Stephen Orry, and felt like a man who had stumbled into a hidden grave. He had set out over the seas to search for his father, and here, at his first setting foot on the land, his father lay at his feet. So this was Stephen Orry; this was he for whom his mother had given up all; this was he for whom she had taken a father's curse; this was he for whom she had endured poverty and shame; this was he who had neglected her, struck her, forgotten her with another woman; this was he who had killed her—the poor, loving, loyal, passionate heart—not in a day, or an hour, or a moment, but in twenty long years. Jason stood over the bed and looked down. Surely the Lord God had heard his great vow and delivered the man into his hands. He would have hunted the world over to find him, but here at a stride he had him. It was Heaven's own justice, and if he held back now the curse of his dead mother would follow him from the grave.

Yet a trembling shook his whole frame, and his heart beat as if it would break. Why did he wait? He remembered the tenderness that had crept upon him not many minutes ago, as he listened to the poor baby babble of the man's delirium, and at that the gall in his throat seemed to choke him. He hated himself for yielding to it, for now he knew for whom it had been meant. It had been meant for his own father doting over the memory of another son. That son had supplanted himself; that son's mother had supplanted his own mother; and yet he, in his ignorance, had all but wept for both of them. But no matter, he was now to be God's own right hand of justice on this evil-doer.

Dawn was breaking, and its woolly light crept lazily in at the little window, past the lamp that still burned on the window board. The wind had fallen, and the sea lay gloomy and dark, as if with its own heavy memories of last night's work. The gray light fell on the sick man's face, and under Jason's eyes it seemed to light up the poor miserable, naked soul within. The delirium had now set in strong, and many were the wild words and frequent was the cry that rang through the little house.

"Not while he is like that," thought Jason. "I will wait for the lull."

He took up a pillow in both hands and stood by the bed and waited, never lifting his eyes off the face. But the lull did not come. Would it not come at all? What if the delirium were never

to pass away? Could he still do the thing he intended? No, no, no! But Heaven had heard his vow and led him there. The delirium would yet pass; then he would accuse his father, face to face and eye to eye, and then—

The current of Jason's thoughts was suddenly arrested by a cry from the sick man. It was "Rachel! Rachel! Rachel!" spoken in a voice of deep entreaty, and there came after it in disjointed words of the Icelandic tongue a pitiful appeal for forgiveness. At that a great fear seized upon Jason, and the pillow dropped from his hands to the ground. "Rachel! Rachel!" It was the old cry of the years that were gone, but working with how great a difference—then, to stir up evil passions—now, to break down the spirit of revenge.

"Rachel! Rachel!" came again in the same pitiful voice of supplication; and at the sound of that name so spoken, the bitterness of Jason's heart went off like a wail of the wind. It was a cry of remorse; a cry for pardon; a cry for mercy. There could be no jugglery. In that hour of the mind's awful vanquishment a human soul stood naked behind him as before its Maker.

Jason's great resolve was shaken. Had it been only a blind tangle of passion and pain? If the Almighty had called him to be the instrument of His vengeance, would He have delivered his enemy into his hands like this—dying, delirious, with broken brain and broken heart?

Still his mother's name came from his father's lips, and then his mind went back to the words that had so lately passed between them. "Let me be your father, though I am a dying man." Ah! sweet, beautiful, blind fallacy—could he not let it be?

The end was very near; the delirium passed away, and Stephen Orry opened his eyes. The great creature was as quiet as a child now, and as soft and gentle as a child's was his deep hoarse voice. He knew that he had been wandering in his mind, and when he looked into Jason's face a pale smile crossed his own.

"I thought I had found her," he said, very simply, "my poor young wife that once was; it was she that I lost so long ago, and did such wrong by."

Jason's throat was choking him, but he stammered out: "Lie still, sir, lie still and rest."

But Stephen Orry talked on in the same simple way: "Ah, how silly I am! I forgot you didn't know."

"Lie still and rest," said Jason again.

"There was some one with her, too. I thought it was her son—her child and mine, that was to come when I left her. And, only

think, I looked again, and it seemed to be you. Yes, you—for it was the face of him that fetched me out of the sea. I thought you were my son indeed."

Then Jason could bear up no longer. He flung himself down on his knees by the bedside, and buried his face in the dying man's breast.

"Father," he sobbed, "I *am* your son."

But Stephen Orry only smiled, and answered very quietly: "Ah, yes, I remember—that was part of our bargain, my good lad. Well, God bless you, my son. God bless and speed you."

And that was the end of Orry.

THE BOOK OF MICHAEL SUNLOCKS

CHAPTER I

RED JASON

Now the facts of this history must stride on some four years, and come to a great crisis in the lives of Greeba and Jason. Every event of that time seemed to draw these two together, and the first of the circumstances that bound them came very close on the death of Stephen Orry. Only a few minutes after Greeba, at the bidding of her two brothers, Stean and Thurstan, had left Jason alone with the dying man, she had parted from them without word or warning, and fled back to the little hut in Port-y-Vullin. With a wild laboring of heart, panting for breath and full of dread, she had burst the door open, fearing to see what she dared not think of; but, instead of the evil work she looked for, she had found Jason on his knees by the bedside, sobbing as if his heart would break, and Stephen Orry passing away with a tender light in his eyes and a word of blessing on his lips. At that sight she had stood on the threshold like one who is transfixed, and how long that moment had lasted she never knew. But the thing she remembered next was that Jason had taken her by the hand and drawn her up, with all the fire of her spirit gone, to where the man lay dead before them, and had made her swear to him there and then never to speak of what she had seen, and to put away from her mind forever the vague things she had but partly guessed. After that he had told her, with a world of pain, that Stephen Orry had been his father; that his father had killed his mother by base neglect and cruelty; that to wipe out his mother's wrongs he had vowed to slay his father; and that his father, not knowing him, save in the vision of his delirium, had died in the act of blessing him. Greeba had yielded to Jason, because she had been conquered by his stronger will, and was in fear of the passion which flashed in his face; but hearing all this, she remembered Michael Sunlocks, and how he must stand as the son of the other woman; and straightway she found her own reasons why she should be silent on all that she had that night seen and heard. This secret was the first of the bonds between them; and the second, though less obvious, was even more real.

Losing no time, Adam Fairbrother had written a letter to

Michael Sunlocks, by that name, telling him of the death of his father, and how, so far as the facts were known, the poor man came by it in making the port in his boat after seeing his son away in the packet. This he had despatched to the only care known to him, that of the Lord Bishop Petersen, at his Latin School of Reykjavik; but after a time the letter had come back, with a note from the Bishop saying that no such name was known to him, and no such student was under his charge. Much afraid that the same storm that had led Stephen Orry to his end had overtaken Michael Sunlocks also, Adam Fairbrother had then promptly readdressed his letter to the care of the Governor-General, who was also the Postmaster, and added a postscript asking if, after the sad event whereof he had thought it his task in love and duty to apprise him, there was the same necessity that his dear boy should remain in Iceland. "But, indite me a few lines without delay," he wrote, "giving me assurance of your safe arrival, for what has happened of late days has haunted me with many fears of mishap."

Then in due course an answer had come from Michael Sunlocks, saying he had landed safely, but there being no regular mails, he had been compelled to await the sailing of English ships to carry his letters; that by some error he had missed the first of these, and was now writing by the next, that many strange things had happened to him, and he was lodged in the house of the Governor-General; that his father's death had touched him very deeply; being brought about by a mischance that so nearly affected himself; that the sad fact, so far from leaving him free to return home, seemed to make it the more necessary that he should remain where he was until he had done what he had been sent to do: and, finally, that what that work was he could not tell in a letter, but only by word of mouth, whenever it pleased God that they should meet again. This, with many words of affection for Adam himself, in thanks for his fatherly anxiety, and some mention of Greeba in tender but guarded terms, was the sum of the only letter that had come from Michael Sunlocks in the four years after Stephen Orry's death to the first of the events that are now to be recorded.

And throughout these years Jason had lived at Lague, having been accepted as housemate by the six Fairbrothers, when the ship-broken men had gone their own ways on receiving from their Dublin owners the wages that were due to them. Though his relation to Stephen Orry had never become known, it had leaked out that he had come into Orry's money. He had done little work. His chief characteristics had been love of liberty and laziness. In the summer he had fished on the sea and in the rivers and he had

shot and hunted in the winter. He had followed these pursuits out of sheer love of an idle life; but if he had a hobby it was the collecting of birds. Of every species on the island, of land or sea fowl, he had found a specimen. He stuffed his birds with some skill, and kept them in the little hut in Port-y-Vullin.

The four years had developed his superb physique, and he had grown to be a yet more magnificent creature than Stephen Orry himself. He was rounder, though his youth might have pardoned more angularity; broader, and more upright, with a proud poise of head, long wavy hair, smooth cheeks, solid white teeth, face of broad lines, an intelligent expression, and a deep voice that made the mountain ring. His dress suited well his face and figure. He wore a skin cap with a peak, a red woolen shirt belted about the waist, breeches of leather, leggings and seaman's boots. The cap was often awry, and a tuft of red hair tumbled over his bronzed forehead, his shirt was torn, his breeches were stained, and his leggings tied with rope; but rough, and even ragged, as his dress was, it sat upon him with a fine rude grace. With a knife in his sheath, a net or a decoy over his arm, a pouch for powder slung behind him, a fowling-piece across his shoulder, and a dog at his heels, he would go away into the mountains as the evening fell. And in the early gleams of sunrise he would stride down again and into the "Hibernian," scenting up the old tavern with tobacco smoke, and carrying many dead birds at his belt, with the blood still dripping from their heads hung down. Folks called him Red Jason, or sometimes Jason the Red.

He began to visit Government House. Greeba was there, but at first he seemed not to see her. Simple greetings he exchanged with her, and that was all the commerce between them. With the Governor, when work was over, he sat and smoked, telling of his own country and its laws, and the ways of its people, talking of his hunting and fishing, calling the mountains Jokulls, and the Tynwald the Loberg, and giving names of his own to the glens, the Chasm of Ravens for the Dhoon, and Broad Shield for Ballaglass. And Adam loved to learn how close was the bond between his own dear isle and the land of the great sea kings of old time, but most of all he listened to what Jason said, that he might thereby know what kind of world it was wherein his dear lad Michael Sunlocks had to live away from him.

"A fine lad," Adam Fairbrother would say to Greeba; "a lad of fearless courage, and unflinching contempt of death, with a great horror of lying and treachery, and an inborn sense of justice. Not tender and gentle with his strength, as my own dear Sunlocks

is, but of a high and serious nature, and having passions that may not be trifled with." And hearing this, and the more deliberate warning of her brothers at Lague, Greeba would remember that she had herself the best reason to know that the passions of Jason could be terrible.

But nothing she recked of it all, for her heart was as light as her manners in those days, and if she thought twice of her relations with Jason she remembered that she was the daughter of the Governor, and he was only a poor sailor lad who had been wrecked off their coast.

Jason was a great favorite with Mrs. Fairbrother, notwithstanding that he did no work. Rumor had magnified the fortune that Stephen Orry had left him, and the two hundred pounds stood at two thousand in her eyes. With a woman's quck instinct she saw how Jason stood toward Greeba, almost before he had himself become conscious of it, and she smiled on him and favored him. A whisper of this found its way from Lague to Government House, and old Adam shook his head. He had nothing against Jason, except that the lad was not fond of work, and whether Jason was poor or rich counted for very little, but he could not forget his boy Sunlocks.

Thus while Greeba remained with her father there was but little chance that she could wrong the promise she had made to Michael; but events seemed to force her into the arms of Jason. Her mother had never been of an unselfish spirit, and since parting from her husband she had shown a mean penuriousness. This affected her six sons chiefly, and they realized that when she had taken their side against their father she had taken the cream of their living also. Lague was now hers for her lifetime, and only theirs after she was done with it; and if they asked much more for their work than bed and board she reminded them of this, and bade them wait. Soon tiring of their Lenten entertainment, they trooped off, one after one, to their father, badly as they had dealt by him, and complained loudly of the great wrong he had done them when he made over the lands of Lague to their mother. What were they now, though sons of the Governor? No better than hinds on their mother's farm, expected to work for her from light to dusk, and getting nothing for their labor but the house she kept over their heads. Grown men they all were now, and the elder of them close on their prime, yet none were free to marry, for none had the right to a penny for the living he earned; and all this came of their father's unwise generosity.

Old Adam could not gainsay them, and he would not reproach

them, so he did all that remained to him to do, and that was to exercise a little more of the same unwise generosity, and give them money. And finding this easy means of getting what they wanted, they came again, and again, all six of them, from Asher to Gentleman Johnny, and as often as they came they went away satisfied, though old Adam shook his head when he saw how mean and small was the spirit of his sons. Greeba also shook her head, but from another cause, for though she grudged her brothers nothing she knew that her father was fast being impoverished. Once she hinted as much, but old Adam made light of her misgivings, saying that if the worst came to the worst he had still his salary, and what was the good of his money if he might not use it, and what was the virtue of charity if it must not begin at home?

But the evil was not ended there for the six lumbering men who objected to work without pay were nothing loth to take pay without work. Not long after the first of the visits to Government House, Lague began to be neglected.

Asher lay in the ingle and dozed; Thurstan lay about in the "Hibernian" and drank; Ross and Stean started a ring of gamecocks, Jacob formed a nest of private savings, and John developed his taste for dress and his appetite for gallantries. Mrs. Fairbrother soon discovered the source of the mischief, and railed at the name of her husband, who was ruining her boys and bringing herself to beggary.

Thus far had matters gone, during the four years following the death of Stephen Orry, and then a succession of untoward circumstances hastened a climax of grave consequence to all the persons concerned in this history. Two bad seasons had come, one on the end of the other. The herring fishing had failed, and the potato crop had suffered a blight. The fisher folk and the poor farming people were reduced to sore straits. The one class had to throw the meal bag across their shoulders and go around the houses begging, and the other class had to compound with their landlords or borrow from their neighbors.

Where few were rich and many were poor, the places of call for either class were not numerous. But two houses at least were always open to those who were in want—Lague and Government House; though their welcome at the one was very unlike their welcome at the other. Mrs. Fairbrother relieved their necessities by lending them money on mortgage on their lands or boats, and her interest was in proportion to their necessities. They had no choice but accept her terms, however rigid, and if in due course they could not meet them they had no resource but to yield up

to her their little belongings. In less than half a year boat after boat, croft after croft, and even farm after farm had fallen into her hands. She grew rich, and the richer she grew the more penurious she became. There were no banks in the north of the island then, and the mistress of Lague was in effect the farmers' banker.

Government House, in the south of the island, had yet more applicants; but what the Governor had he gave, and when his money was gone he served out orders on the millers for meal and the weavers for cloth. It soon became known that he kept open house to the poor, and from north and south, east and west, the needy came to him in troops, and with them came the idle and the dissolute. He knew the one class from the other, yet railed at both in threatening words, reproaching their improvidence and predicting his own ruin, but he ended by giving to all alike. They found out his quarter-day and came in throngs to meet it, knowing that, bluster as he would, while the good man had money he was sure to give it to all who asked. The sorry troop, good and bad, worthy and unworthy, soon left him without a pound. He fumed at this when Greeba cast up his reckoning, but comforted himself with the thought that he had still his stipend of five hundred pounds a year coming in to him, however deeply it might be condemned beforehand.

At the first pinch of his necessity his footman deserted him and after the footman went the groom.

"They say the wind is tempered to the shorn sheep, Greeba," said he, and laughed.

He had always stood somewhat in awe of these great persons, and his spirits rose visibly at the loss of them, for he had never yet reconciled himself to the dignity of his state.

"It's wonderful how much a man may do for himself when he's put to it," he said, as he groomed his own horse next morning. His sons were not so easily appeased, and muttered hard words at his folly, for their own supplies had by this time suffered curtailment. He was ruining himself at a breakneck pace, and if he came to die in the gutter, who should say that it had not served him right? The man who threw away his substance with his eyes open deserved to know by bitter proof that it had gone. Jason heard all this at the fireside at Lague, and though he could not answer it, he felt his palms itch sorely, and his fists tighten like ribs of steel, and his whole body stiffen up and silently measure its weight against that of Thurstan Fairbrother, the biggest and heaviest and hardest-spoken of the brothers. Greeba heard it, too, but took it with a gay lightsomeness, knowing all, yet fearing nothing.

"What matter?" she said, and laughed.

But strange and silly enough were some of the shifts that her father's open-handedness put her to in these bad days of the bitter need of the island's poor people.

It was the winter season, when things were at their worst, and on Christmas Eve Greeba had a goose killed for their Christmas dinner. The bird was hung in one of the outhouses, to drain and cool before being plucked, and while it was there Greeba went out, leaving her father at home. Then came three of the many who had never yet been turned empty from the Governor's door. Adam blustered at all of them, but he emptied his pockets to one, gave the goose to another, and smuggled something out of the pantry for the third.

The goose was missed by the maid whose work it was to pluck it, and its disappearance was made known to Greeba on her return. Guessing at the way it had gone, she went into the room where her father sat placidly smoking, and trying to look wondrous serene and innocent.

"What do you think, father?" she said; "some one has stolen the goose."

"I'm afraid, my dear," he answered meekly, "I gave it away to poor Kinrade, the parish clerk. Would you believe it, he and his good old wife hadn't a bit or a sup for their Christmas dinner?"

"Well," said Greeba, "you'll have to be content with bread and cheese for your own, for we have nothing else in the house now."

"I'm afraid, my dear," he stammered, "I gave away the cheese too. Poor daft Gelling, who lives on the mountains, had nothing to eat but a loaf of bread, poor fellow."

Now the rapid impoverishment of the Governor was forcing Greeba into the arms of Jason, though they had yet no idea that this was so; and when the crisis came that loosened the ties which held Greeba to her father, it came as a surprise to all three of them.

The one man in the island who had thus far shown a complete indifference to the sufferings of the poor in their hour of tribulation was the Bishop of Sodor and Man. This person was a fashionable ecclesiastic—not a Manxman—a Murray, and a near kinsman of the Lord of the Island, who had kept the See four years vacant that the sole place of profit in the island might thereby be retained for his own family. Many years the Bishop had drawn his stipend, tithe and glebe rents, which were very large in proportion to the diocese, and almost equal in amount to the emoluments of the whole body of the native clergy. He held small com-

merce with his people, and the bad seasons troubled him little until he felt the pinch of them himself. But when he found it hard to gather his tithe he began to realize that the island was passing through sore straits. Then he sold his tithe charges by auction in England, and they were knocked down to a Scotch factor—a hard man, untroubled by sentiment, and not too proud to get his own by means that might be thought to soil the cloth of a Bishop.

When news of this transfer reached the island the Manx clergy looked black, though they dared say nothing; but the poor people grumbled audibly, for they knew what was coming. It soon came, in the shape of writs from the Bishop's seneschal, served by the Bishop's sumner. Then the cry of the poor reached the Governor at Castletown. No powers had he to stay the seizure of goods and stock, for arrears that were forfeit to the Church Courts, but he wrote to the Bishop, asking him to stay execution at such a moment of the island's necessity. The Bishop answered him curtly that the matter was now outside his control. At that the Governor inquired into the legality of the sale, and found good reason to question it. He wrote again to the Bishop, hinting at his doubts, and then the Bishop told him to mind his own business. "My business is the welfare of the people," the Governor answered, "and be you Bishop or Lord, or both, be sure that while I am here I will see to it."

"Such is the penalty of setting a beggar on horseback," the Bishop rejoined.

Meantime the Scotch factor went on with his work, and notices were served that if arrears of tithe rent were not paid by a given date, cattle or crop to the value of them would then be seized in the Bishop's name. When the word came to Government House, the Governor announced to Greeba his intention to be present at the first seizure. She tried to restrain him, fearing trouble; but he was fully resolved. Then she sent word by old Chalse A'Killey to her brothers at Lague, begging them to go with their father and see him through, but one and all refused. There was mischief brewing, and if the Governor had a right to interfere, he had a right to have the civil forces at the back of him. If he had no right to the help of Castle Rushen he had no right to stop the execution. In any case, they had no wish to meddle.

When old Chalse brought back this answer, Red Jason chanced to be at Castletown. He had been at Government House oftener than usual since the clouds had begun to hang on it. Coming down from the mountains, with his pipe in his mouth, his fowling-piece over his shoulder, and his birds hanging from his belt, he would

sometimes contrive to get up into the yard at the back, fling down a brace of pheasants on to the kitchen floor, and go off again without speaking to any one. Greeba had been too smart for him this time, and he was standing before her with a look of guilt when Chalse came up on his errand. Then Jason heard all, and straightway offered to go with the Governor, and never let wit of his intention.

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" said Greeba, and she looked up into his bronzed face and smiled proudly, and her long lashes blinked over her beautiful eyes. Her glance seemed to go through him. It seemed to go through all nature; and fill the whole world with a new, glad light.

The evil day came, and the Governor was as good as his word. He went away to Peel, where the first seizure was to be made. There a great crowd had already gathered, and at sight of Adam's face a great shout went up. The factor heard it, as he came on from Bishop's Court with a troop of his people about him. "I'll mak' short shrift of a' that, the noo," he said. When he came up he ordered that a cowhouse door should be opened and the cattle brought out for instant sale, for he had an auctioneer by his side. But the door was found to be locked, and he shouted to his men to leap on to the roof and strip off the thatch. Then the Governor cried "Stop," and called on the factor to desist, for though he might seize the cattle there would be no sale that day, since no man there present would take the bread out of the mouths of the poor.

"Then they shall try the milk," said the factor, with a hoarse laugh, and at the same moment the Bishop's seneschal, a briefless advocate, stepped out, pushed his hot face into Adam's and said that, Governor as he was, if he encouraged the people to resist, the sumner should there and then summon him to appear before the Church Courts for contempt.

At that insult the crowd surged around, muttering deep oaths, and factor and seneschal were both much hustled. In another moment there was a general struggle; people were shouting, the Governor was on the ground and in danger of being trodden under foot, the factor had drawn a pistol, and some of his men were flourishing hangers.

By this time Red Jason lounged up, as if by chance, to the outskirts of the crowd, and now he pushed through with great strides, lifted the Governor to his feet, laid the factor on the broad of his back, and clapped his pistol hand under one heavy heel. Then the hangers flashed round Jason's face, and he stretched his arms and laid out about him. In two minutes he had made a wide circle

where he stood, and in two minutes more the factor and his men, with seneschal, sumner, auctioneer, and all the riffraff of the Church Courts, were going off up the road with best foot foremost, and a troop of the people, like a pack of hounds at full cry, behind.

Then the remnant of the crowd compared notes and bruises.

"Man alive, what a boy to fight," said one.

"Who was it?" said another.

"Och, Jason the Red, of coorse," said a third.

Jason was the only man badly injured. He had a deep cut over the right brow, and though the wound bled freely he made light of it. But Adam was much troubled at the sight.

"I much misdoubt me but we'll rue the day," he said.

Jason laughed at that, and they went back to Castletown together. Greeba saw them coming, and all but fainted at the white bandage that gleamed across Jason's forehead; but he bade her have no fear, for his wound was nothing. Nevertheless she must needs dress it afresh, though her deft fingers trembled wofully, and, seeing how near the knife had come to the eye, all her heart was in her mouth. But he only laughed at the bad gash, and thought with what cheer he would take such another just to have the same tender hands bathe it, and stitch it, and to see the troubled heaving of the round bosom that was before him while his head was held down.

"Aren't you very proud of yourself, Jason?" she whispered softly, as she finished.

"Why proud?" said he.

"It's the second time you have done as I have bidden you, and suffered for doing so," she said.

He knew not what reply to make, scarcely realizing which way her question tended. So, feeling very stupid, he said again:

"But why proud?"

"Aren't you, then?" she said. "Because *I* am proud of you."

They were alone, and he saw her breast heave and her great eyes gleam, and he felt dizzy. At the next instant their hands touched, and then his blood boiled, and before he knew what he was doing he had clasped the beautiful girl in his arms, and kissed her on the lips and cheek. She sprang away from him, blushing deeply, but he knew that she was not angry, for she smiled through her deep rich color, as she fled out of the room on tiptoe. From that hour he troubled his soul no more with fears that he was unworthy of Greeba's love, for he looked at his wound in the glass, and remembered her words, and laughed in his heart.

The Governor was right that there would be no sale for arrears of tithe charges. After a scene at Bishop's Court the factor went back to England, and no more was heard of the writs served by the sumner. But wise folks predicted a storm for Adam Fairbrother, and the great people were agreed that his conduct had been the maddest folly.

"He'll have to take the horns with the hide," said Deemster Lace.

"He's a fool that doesn't know which side his bread is buttered," said Mrs. Fairbrother.

The storm came quickly, but not from the quarter expected.

Since the father of the Duke of Athol had sold his fiscal rights to the English Crown the son had rued the bargain. All the interest in the island that remained to him lay in his title, his patronage of the Bishopric, and his Governor-Generalship. His title counted for little, for it was unknown at the English Court, and the salary of his Governor-Generalship counted for less, for, not being resident in the island, he had to pay a local Governor. The patronage of the Bishopric was the one tangible item of his interest, and when the profits of that office were imperiled he determined to part with his truncated honors. Straightway he sold them bag and baggage to the Crown, for nearly six times as much as his father had got for the insular revenues. When this neat act of truck and trade was complete he needed his deputy no more, and sent Adam Fairbrother an instant warning, with a half-year's salary for smart money.

The blow came with a shock on Greeba and her father, but there was no leisure to sigh over it. Government House and its furniture belonged to the Government, and the new Governor might take possession of it at any moment. But the stock on its lands was Adam's and as it was necessary to dispose of it, he called a swift sale. Half the island came to it, and many a brave brag came then from many a vain stomach. Adam was rightly served! What was there to expect when jacks were set in office? With five hundred a year coming in for twenty years he was as poor as a church mouse! Aw, money in the hands of some men was like water in a sieve!

Adam's six sons were there, looking on with sneering lips, as much as to say, "Let nobody blame us for a mess like this." Red Jason was there, too, glooming as black as a thundercloud, and itching to do battle with somebody if only a fit case would offer.

Adam himself did not show his face. He was ashamed—he was crushed—he was humiliated—but not for the reason attributed to

him by common report. Alone he sat, and smoked and smoked, in the room at the back, from whence he had seen Greeba and Michael Sunlocks that day when they walked side by side into the paved yard, and when he said within himself: "Now, God grant that this may be the end of all parting between them and me." He was thinking of that day now; that it was very, very far away. He heard the clatter of feet below, and the laughter of the bidders and the wondrous jests of the facetious auctioneer.

When the work was over, and the house felt quiet and so, so empty, Greeba came in to him, with eyes large and red, and kissed him without saying a word. Then he became mighty cheerful all at once, and bade her fetch out her account books, for they had their own reckoning yet to make, and now was the time to make it. She did as she was bidden, and counted up her father's debts, with many a tear dropping over them as if trying to blot them out forever. And meanwhile he counted up his half-year's smart money, and the pile of silver and gold that had come of the sale. When all was reckoned, they found they would be just fifteen pounds to the good, and that was now their whole fortune.

Next morning there came a great company of the poor, and stood in silence about the house. They knew that Adam had nothing to give, and they came for nothing; they on their part had nothing to offer, and they had nothing to say; but this was their way of showing sympathy with the good man in his dark hour.

The next morning after that old Adam said to Greeba:

"Come, girl, there is only one place in the island that we have a right to go to, and that's Lague. Let's away."

And toward Lague they set their faces, afoot, all but empty-handed, and with no one but crazy old Chalse A'Killey for company.

CHAPTER II

HOW GREEBA WAS LEFT WITH JASON

It was early summer, and the day was hot; there had been three weeks of drought, and the roads were dusty. Adam walked with a stout blackthorn stick, his flaccid figure sometimes swaying for poise and balance, and his snow-white hair rising gently in the soft breeze over his tender old face, now plowed so deep with labor and sorrow. Chalse was driving his carrier's cart, whereon lay all that was left of Adam's belongings, save only what the good man

carried in his purse. And seeing how heavy the road was to one of Adam's years, though his own were hardly fewer, poor old Chalse, recking nothing of dignity lost thereby, would have had him to mount the shafts and perch on the box behind the pony's tail. But Adam, thinking as little of pride, said No, that every herring should hang by its own gills, and the pony had its full day's work before it; moreover, that it was his right to walk at his own expense now, having ridden twenty years at the expense of the island. So he kept the good blackthorn moving, and Greeba stepped along nimbly by his side. And when the Castletown coach overtook and passed them on its way to Douglas, and some of the farming folk who rode on it leaned over saucily and hailed Adam by his Christian name, he showed no shame or rancor, until, when the coach was gone, he caught a glimpse of the hot color that had mounted to Greeba's cheeks. Then, without a word, he turned his mellow old face to his feet, and strode along a good half mile in silence.

And meantime, Chalse, thinking to lighten the burden of the way with cheerful talk, rattled along in his crazy screech on many subjects, but found that all came round, by some strange twist, to the one subject that might not be discussed. Thus, looking at his pony, he told of the donkey he had before it, the same that Michael Sunlocks rode long years ago; how he himself had fallen sick and could not keep it, and so gave it without a penny to a neighbor for feeding it; and how when he got better he wanted to borrow it, but the neighbor, in base ingratitude and selfishness, would not lend it without pay.

"Faith, it's alwis lek that," said Chalse. "Give a man yer shirt, and ye must cut yer lucky or he'll be after axing ye for yer skin."

When they came by Douglas, Chalse was for skirting round by the Spring Valley through Braddon, but old Adam, seeing his drift, would not pretend to be innocent of it, and said that if there were dregs in his cup he was in the way of draining them without making too many wry faces about it. And as for the people of the town, if they thought no shame to stare at him he thought no shame to be stared at, yet that that was good enough for himself might not be so for one who had less deserved it, and Greeba could go with Chalse by Braddon, and they would meet again on Onchan Hill.

To this Greeba would not consent; and as it chanced there was little need, for when they got into Douglas the town was all astir with many carriages and great troops of people making for the quay, so that no one seemed so much as to see the little company of three that came covered with dust out of the country roads.

"Aw, bad cess, what jeel is this?" said Chalse; and before they had crossed the little market-place by the harbor, where the bells of old St. Matthew's rang out a merry peal, they learned for certain the cause of the joyful commotion; for there they were all but run down by the swaying and surging crowds, that came shouting and cheering by the side of an open carriage, wherein sat a very old gentleman in the uniform of a soldier. It was, as Adam had already divined the new Governor-General, Colonel Cornelius Smelt, newly arrived that day in the island as the first direct representative of the English crown in succession to the Lords of Man. And at that brave sight poor old Chalse—who jumbled in his distraught brain the idea of Adam's late position with that of his master the Duke of Athol, and saw nothing but that this gentleman, in his fine rigging, was come in Adam's place, and was even now on his way to Castletown to take possession of Government House, and that the bellowing mob that not a month before had doffed their caps before Adam's face, now shoved him off the pavement without seeing him—stamped and raved and shook his fist over the people, as if he would brain them.

They slept at Onchan that night, and next day they reached Kirk Maughold. And coming on the straggling old house at Lague, after so long an absence, Adam was visibly moved, saying he had seen many a humiliation since the days when he lived in it, and might the Lord make them profitable to his soul; but only let it please God to grant him peace and content and daily bread, and there should be no more going hence in the years that were left to him.

At that Greeba felt a tingling on both sides of her heart, for her fears were many of the welcome that awaited them.

It was nigh upon noon, and the men were out in the fields; but Mrs. Fairbrother was at home, and she saw the three when they opened the gate and came down under the elms.

"Now, I thought as much," she said within herself, "and I warrant I know their errand."

Adam entered the house with what cheer of face he could command, being hard set to keep back his tears, and hailed his wife in a jovial tone, although his voice threatened to break, and sat himself down in his old seat by the chimney corner, with his blackthorn stick between his knees and his hands resting upon it. But Mrs. Fairbrother made no answer to his greeting, and only glanced from him to Greeba, who tripped softly behind him, and from Greeba to Chalse, who came shambling in after them, vacantly scratching his uncovered head. Then, drawing herself up, and holding back

her skirts, she said very coldly, while her wrinkled face twitched:

"And pray what ill wind blows you here?"

"An ill wind indeed, Ruth," Adam answered, "for it is the wind of adversity. You must have heard of our misfortune since the whole island knows it. Well, it is not for me to complain, for God shapes our ways, and He knows what is best. But I am an old man now, Ruth, little able to look to myself, still less to another, and—"

While he spoke, Mrs. Fairbrother tapped her foot impatiently, and then broke in with—

"Cut it short, sir. What do you want?"

Adam lifted his eyes with a stupefied look, and answered very quietly: "I want to come home, Ruth."

"Home!" cried Mrs. Fairbrother, sharply. "And what home if you please?"

Adam sat agape for a moment, and then said, speaking as calmly as before, "What home, Ruth? Why, what home but this?"

"This, indeed! This is not your home," said Mrs. Fairbrother.

"Not my home!" said Adam, slowly, dropping back in his seat like one who is dumfounded.

"Not my home! Did you say that this was not my home?" he said, suddenly bracing up. "Why, woman, I was born here; so was my father before me, and my father's father before him. Five generations of my people have lived and died here, and the very roof rafters over your head must know us."

"Hoity-toity!" cried Mrs. Fairbrother, "and if you had lived here much longer not a rafter of them all would have been left to shelter us. No, sir. I've kept the roof on this house, and it is mine."

"It is yours indeed," said Adam slowly, "for I gave it you."

"You gave it me!" cried Mrs. Fairbrother. "Say, I took it as my right when all that you had was slipping through your fingers like sand, as everything does that ever touches them."

At that hard word old Adam drew himself up with a great dignity of bearing, and said:

"There is one thing that has indeed slipped through my fingers like sand, and that is the fidelity of the woman who swore before God forty and odd years ago to love and honor me."

"Crinkleum-crankum!" cried Mrs. Fairbrother. "A pretty thing, truly, that I should toil and moil at my age to keep house and home together ready and waiting for you, when your zany doings have shut every other door against you. Misfortunes, indeed! A fine name for your mistakes!"

"I may have made mistakes, madam," said Adam; "but true it is, as the wise man has said, that he who has never made mistakes has never made anything."

"Tush!" said Mrs. Fairbrother.

"Ruth, do you refuse to take me in?" said Adam.

"This house is mine," said she; "mine by law and deed, as tight as wax can make it."

"Do you refuse to take me in?" said Adam again, rising to his feet.

"You have brought ruin on yourself by your shilly-shally and vain folly," said she; "and now you think to pat your nose and say your prayers by my fireside."

"Ruth," said Adam once more, "do you refuse to take me in?"

"Yes, and that I do," said she. "You would beggar me as you have beggared yourself, but that I warrant you never shall."

Then there was a grim silence for a moment. Old Adam gripped convulsively the staff he leaned on, and all but as loud as the ticking of the clock was the beating of his heart.

"God give me patience," he said. "Yes, I'll bear it meekly. Ruth," he said, huskily, "I'll not trouble you. Make yourself sure of that. While there's a horse-wallet to hang on my old shoulders, and a bit of barley bread to put in it, I'll rove the country round, but I'll never come on my knees to you and say, 'I am your husband, I gave you all you had, and you are rich and I'm a beggar, and I am old—give me for charity my bed and board.'"

But unable to support any longer the strife for mastery that was tearing at his heart, he gave way to his wrath, and cried out in a loud voice, "Out on you, woman! Out on you! God forgive me the evil day I set eyes on you! God forgive me the damned day I took you to my breast to rend it."

While this had been going forward Greeba had stood silent at the back of her father's chair, with eyelashes quivering and the fingers of both hands clenched together. But now she stepped forward and said: "Forgive him, mother. Do not be angry with him. He will be sorry for what he has said: I'm sure he will. But only think, dear mother: he is in great, great trouble, and he is past work, and if this is not his home, then he is homeless."

And at the sound of that pleading voice Adam's wrath turned in part to tenderness, and he dropped back to the chair and began to weep.

"I am ashamed of my tears, child," he said; "but they are not shed for myself. Nor did I come here for my own sake, though your mother thinks I did. No, child, no; say no more. I'll repent

me of nothing I have said to her—no, not one word. She is a hard, a cruel woman; but, thank Heaven, I have my sons left to me yet. She is not flesh of my flesh, though one with me in wedlock; but they are, and they will never see their father turned from the door."

At that instant three of the six Fairbrothers, Asher, Ross, and Thurstan, came in from the stackyard, with the smell of the furze-rick upon them that they had been trimming for the cattle. And Adam, without waiting to explain, cried in the fervor of his emotion, "This is not your will, Asher?" Whereupon Asher, without any salutation, answered him, "I don't know what you mean, sir," and turned aside.

"He has damned your mother," said Mrs. Fairbrother, with her morning apron to her eyes, "and cursed the day he married her."

"But she is turning me out of the house," said Adam. "This house—my father's house."

"Ask her pardon, sir," Asher muttered, "and she will take you back."

"Her pardon! God in heaven!" Adam cried.

"You are an old man now, sir," said Thurstan.

"So I am; so I am," said Adam.

"And you are poor as well."

"That's true, Thurstan; that's true, though your brother forgets it."

"So you should not hold your head too high."

"What! Are you on her side, also? Asher, Thurstan, Ross, you are my sons—would you see me turned out of the house?"

The three men hung their heads. "What mother says he must agree to," muttered Asher.

"But I gave you all I had," said Adam. "If I am old I am your father, and if I am poor you know best who made me so."

"We are poor, too, sir; we have nothing, and we do not forget who is to blame for it," Thurstan growled.

"You gave everything away from us," grumbled Ross; "and, because your bargain is a rue bargain, you want us now to stand aback of you."

And Stean and Jacob and John coming in at that moment, Jacob said, very slyly, with something like a sneer:

"Ah, yes, and who took the side of a stranger against his own children? What of your good Michael Sunlocks now, sir? Is he longing for you? Or have you never had the scribe of a line from him since he turned his back on you, four years ago?"

Then Greeba's eyes flashed with anger. "For shame," she cried,

"for shame! Oh, you mean, pitiful men, to bait and badger him like this."

Jacob threw up his head and laughed, and Mrs. Fairbrother said: "Chut, girl, you're waxing apace with your big words considering you're a chit that has wasted her days in London and hasn't learned to muck a byre yet."

Adam did not hear her. He sat like a man who is stunned by a heavy blow. "Not for myself," he mumbled, "no, not for myself, though they all think it." Then he turned to his sons and said: "You think I came to beg for bed and board for myself, but you are wrong. I came to demand it for the girl. I may have no claim upon you, but she has, for she is one with you all and can ask for her own. She has no home with her father now, for it seems that he has none for himself; but her home is here, and here I mean to leave her."

"Not so fast, sir," said John. "All she can ever claim is what may one day be hers when we ourselves come into anything. Meantime, like her brothers, she has nothing but what she works for."

"Works for, you wagtail!" cried Adam; "she is a woman! Do you hear?—a woman?"

"Woman or man, where's the difference here?" said Gentleman John, and he snapped his fingers.

"Where's the difference, you jackanapes? Do you ask me where's the difference here? Here? In grace, in charity, in unselfishness, in faith in the good; in fidelity to the true, in filial love and duty! There's the difference, you jackanapes."

"You are too old to quarrel with, sir; I will spare you," said Gentleman John.

"Spare me, you whipper-snapper! *You* will spare *me!* But oh, let me have patience! If I have cursed the day I first saw my wife let me not also curse the hour when she first bore me children and my heart was glad. Asher, you are my first-born, and Heaven knows what you were to me. You will not stand by and listen to this. She is your sister, my son. Think of it—your only sister."

Asher twisted about, where he sat by the window nook, pretending to doze, and said: "The girl is nothing to me. She is nothing to any of us. She has been with you all the days of her life except such as you made her to spend with strangers. She is no sister of ours."

Then Adam turned to Ross. "And do you say the same?" he asked.

"What can she do here?" said Ross. "Nothing. This is no place for your great ladies. We work, here, every man and woman of us, from daylight to dark, in the fields and the dairy. Best send her back to her fine friends in London."

"Ay," said Jacob, glancing up with a brazen smile into Greeba's face, "or marry her straight off—that is the shortest way. I heard a little bird tell of some one who might have her. Don't look astonished, Miss, for I make no doubt you know who it is. He is away on the mountains now, but he'll be home before long."

Greeba's eyes glistened, but not a muscle of her countenance changed. Only she clutched at the back of her father's chair and clung to it. And Adam, struggling hard to master the emotion that made his whole body to sway and tremble in his seat, said slowly: "If she is not your sister, at least she is your mother's daughter, and a mother knows what that means." Then turning to Mrs. Fairbrother, who still stood apart with her housewife's apron to her eyes, he said: "Ruth, the child is your daughter, and by that deed you speak of she is entitled to her share of all that is here—"

"Yes," said Mrs. Fairbrother, sharply, "but only when I am done with it."

"Even so," said Adam, "would you see the child want before that, or drive her into any marriage, no matter what?"

"I will take her," said Mrs. Fairbrother deliberately, "on one condition."

"What it is, Ruth?" said Adam; "name it, that I may grant it."

"That you shall give up all control of her, and that she shall give up all thought of you."

"What?"

"That you shall never again expect to see her or hear from her, or hold commerce of any kind with her."

"But why? Why?"

"Because I may have certain plans for her future welfare that you might try to spoil."

"Do they concern Michael Sunlocks?"

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Fairbrother, with a toss of the head.

"Then they concern young Jason, the Icelander," said Adam.

"If so, it is *my* concern," said Mrs. Fairbrother.

"And that is your condition?"

"Yes."

"And you ask me to part from her forever? Think of it, she is my only daughter. She has been the light of my eyes. You have never loved her as I have loved her. You know it is the truth.

And you ask me to see her no more, and never more to hear from her. Now, God punish you for this, you cold-hearted woman!"

"Take care, sir. Fewer words, or mayhap I will recall my offer. If you are wise you will be calm for the girl's sake."

"You are right," he said, with his head down. "It is not for me to take the bread out of my child's mouth. She shall choose for herself."

Then he twisted about to where Greeba stood in silence behind his chair. "Greeba," he said, with a world of longing in his eyes, "my darling, you see how it is. I am old and very poor, and, Heaven pity my blind folly, I have no home to offer you, for I have none to shelter my own head. Don't fear for me, for I have no fear for myself. I will be looked to in the few days that remain to me, and, come what may, the sorry race of my foolish life will soon be over. But you have made no mistakes that merit my misfortunes. So choose, my child, choose. It is poverty with me or plenty with your mother. Choose, my child, choose; and let it be quickly, let it be quickly, for my old heart is bursting."

Then the brave girl drew herself proudly up, her brilliant eyes aflame, and her whole figure erect and quivering.

"Choose?" she cried, in a piercing voice; "there is no choice. I will go with my father, and follow him over the world, though we have no covering but the skies above us."

And then Adam leaped from his chair to his feet, and the infirmity of his years seemed gone in an instant, and his wet face shone with the radiance of a great joy. "Do you hear that, you people?" he cried. "There's grace, and charity, and unselfishness, and love left in the world still. Thank Heaven, I have not yet to curse the day her body brought forth children. Come, Greeba, we will go our ways, and God's protection will go with us. 'I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.'"

He strode across to the door, then stopped and looked back to where his sons stood together with the looks of whipped dogs.

"And you, you unnatural sons," he cried, "I cast you out of my mind. I give you up to your laziness and drunkenness and vain pleasures. I am going to one who is not flesh of my flesh, and yet he is my son indeed."

Again he made for the door, and stopped on the threshold, and faced about toward his wife. "As for you, woman, your time will come. Remember that! Remember that!"

Greeba laid one hand softly on his shoulder and said: "Come, father, come," but again he looked back at his sons and said: "Fare-

well, all of you! Farewell ! You will see me no more. May a day like this that has come to your father never, never come to you."

And then all his brave bearing, his grand strength, broke down in a moment, and as the girl laid hold of his arm, lest he should reel and fall, he stumbled out at the threshold, sobbing beneath his breath: "Sunlocks, my boy; Sunlocks, I am coming to you—I am coming to you."

Chalse A'Killey followed them out, muttering in an undertone some deep imprecations that no one heeded. "Strange," said he, "the near I was to crucifying the Lord afresh and swearing a mortal swear, only I remembered my catechism and the good John Wesley."

At the gate to the road they met Jason, who was coming down from Barrule with birds at his belt. With bewildered looks Jason stood and looked at them as they came up, a sorry spectacle, in the brightness of the midday sun. Old Adam himself strode heavily along, with his face turned down and his white hair falling over his cheeks. By his side Greeba walked, bearing herself as proudly as she might, with her head thrown back and her wet eyes trying hard to smile. A pace or two behind came Chalse, with his pony and cart, grunting hoarsely in his husky throat. Not a word of greeting did they give to Jason, and he asked for no explanation, for he saw it all after a moment: they being now homeless had drifted back to their old home and had just been turned away from it. And not a word of pity did he on his part dare to offer them, but in the true sympathy of silence he stepped up to Adam and gave him his strong arm to lean upon, and then turned himself about to go their way.

They took the road to Ramsey, and little was said by any of them throughout the long two miles of the journey, save only by Chalse, who never ceased to mutter dark sayings to himself, whereof the chief were praises to God for delivering them without loss of life or limb or hand or even out of a den of lions, for, thanks be to the Lord! He had drawn their teeth.

Now though the world is hard enough on a good man in the hour of his trouble, there are ever more tender hearts to compassionate his distresses than bitter ones to triumph over his adversity, and when Adam Fairbrother came to Ramsey many a door was thrown open to him by such as were mindful of his former state and found nothing in his fall to merit their resentment. No hospitality would he accept, however, but took up his abode with Greeba in a little lodging in the market-place, with its face to the cross and its back toward the sea. And being safely housed there,

he thanked Jason at the door for the help of his strong arm, and bade him come again at ten o'clock that night, if so be that he was in the way of doing a last service for a poor soul who might never again have it in his power to repay. "I'll come back at ten," said Jason, simply, and so he left them for the present.

And when he was gone Adam said to Greeba as he turned indoors: "A fine lad that, and as simple as a child, but woe to the man who deceives him. Ay, or to the woman either. But you'll never do it, girl? Eh? Never? Never?"

"Why, father, what can you mean? Are we not going away together?" said Geeba.

"True, child, true," said Adam; and so without further answer to her question, twice repeated, he passed with her into the house.

But Adam had his meaning as well as his reason for hiding it. Through the silent walk from Lague he had revolved their position and come to a fixed resolution concerning it. In the heat of his emotion it had lifted up his heart that Greeba had chosen poverty with him before plenty with her mother and her brothers, but when his passion had cooled he rebuked himself for permitting her to do so. What right had he to drag her through the slough of his own necessities! He was for going away, not knowing the fate that was before him, but on what plea made to his conscience dare he take her with him? He was old, his life was behind him, and, save herself, he had no ties. What did it matter to him how his struggle should end? But she was young, she was beautiful, she might form new friendships; the world was before her, the world might yet be at her feet, and life, so sweet and so sad, and yet so good a thing withal, was ready and waiting for her.

Once he thought of Michael Sunlocks, and that the arms that would be open to himself in that distant land would not be closed to Greeba. And once he thought of Jason, and that to leave her behind was to help the schemes that would bring them together. But put it as he would, no farther could he get than this, that she must stay, and he must go away alone.

Yet, knowing the strength of her purpose, he concealed his intention, and his poor bewildered old head went about its work of preparation very artfully. It was Friday, and still not far past noon, when they reached their lodging by the cross. After a hasty meal he set out into the town, leaving Greeba to rest, for she had walked far since early morning. At the quay he inquired the date of a vessel that called there sometimes in summer on its passage from Ireland to Iceland, and to his surprise he found that she was

even then in the harbor, and would go out with the first tide of the next day, which would flow at one o'clock in the morning.

Thereupon he engaged his berth, and paid for his passage. It cost six pounds, besides a daily charge of four shillings for rations. The trip was calculated to last one month with fair wind and weather, such as then promised. Adam counted the cost, and saw that with all present debts discharged, and future ones considered, he might have somewhat between six and seven pounds in his pocket when he set foot in Reykjavik. Being satisfied with this prospect, he went to the High Bailiff for his license to leave the island.

Greeba had heard nothing of this, and as soon as night fell in she went up to bed at her father's entreaty. Her room was at the back of the house and looked out over the sea, and there she saw the young moon rise over the waters as she undressed and lay down to sleep.

Prompt to his hour Jason came, and then Adam told him all.

"I am going away," he said, "far away, indeed into your own country. I go to-night, though my daughter, who is asleep, knows nothing of my intention. Will you do me a service?"

"Try me," said Jason.

And then Adam asked him to stay in Ramsey overnight, that he might be there when Greeba came down in the morning, to break the news to her that her father had gone, and to take her back with him to Lague.

"They will not say no to her, seeing her father is not with her; and the time is coming when she will hold her right to a share of all they have, and none of them dare withhold it."

Jason, who had been up to Lague, had heard of all that had passed there, and played his own part, too, though he said nothing of that. He was now visibly agitated. His calm strength had left him. His eyes were afire, his face twitched, his hands trembled, and he was plainly struggling to say what his quivering lips refused to utter.

"Is there no other way?" he asked. "Must she go back to Lague? Is there no help for it?"

"None," said Adam; "for she is penniless, God forgive me, and beggars may not be choosers."

At that word Jason was unable to support any longer the wild laboring of his heart.

"Yes, yes, but there *is* a way," he cried, "for there is one to whom she is rich enough though he is poor himself, for he would give his life's blood if so be that he could buy her. Many a day

he has seen all and stood aside and been silent, because afraid to speak, but he must speak now, or never."

Hearing this, Adam's face looked troubled, and he answered:

"I will not misdoubt you, my good lad, or question whom you mean."

And Jason's tongue being loosed at last, the hot words came from him like a flood:

"I have been an idle fellow, sir, I know that; good for nothing in the world, any more than the beasts of the field, and maybe it's because I've had nobody but myself to work for; but give me the right to stand beside her and you shall see what I can do, for no brother shall return her cold looks for her sweetness, and never again shall she go back where she will only be despised."

"You are a brave lad, Jason," said Adam, as best he could for the tears that choked him; "and though I have long had other thoughts concerning her, yet could I trust her to your love and keeping and go my ways with content. But no, no, my lad, it is not for me to choose for her; and neither is it for her to choose now."

Pacified by that answer, Jason gave his promise freely, faithfully to do what Adam had asked of him. And the night being now well worn toward midnight, with the first bell of the vessel rung, and old Chalse fussing about in busy preparation, the time had come for Adam to part from Greeba. To bid her farewell was impossible, and to go away without doing so was well-nigh as hard. All he could do was to look upon her in her sleep and whisper his farewell in his heart. So he entered on tiptoe the room where she lay. Softly the moon shone through the window from across the white sea, and fell upon the bed. Pausing at the door, he listened for her breathing, and at last he heard it, for the night was very still, and only by the sea's gentle plash on the beach was the silence broken. Treading softly, he approached the bedside, and there she lay, and the quiet moonlight lay over her—the dear, dear girl, so brave and happy-hearted. Her lips seemed to smile; perhaps she was dreaming. He must take his last look now. Yet no, he must kiss her first. He reached across and lightly touched her pure forehead with his lips. Then she moved and moaned in her sleep, and then her peaceful breathing came again. "Now, peace be with her," Adam murmured, "and the good hand to guard her of the good Father of all."

So Adam Fairbrother went his way, leaving Greeba behind him, and early the next morning Jason took her back to Lague.

CHAPTER III

THE WOOING OF JASON

Now the one thing that Jason did not tell to Adam Fairbrother was that, on hearing from Jacob, as spokesman of his brothers, the story of their treatment of Greeba and their father, he had promised to break every bone in their six worthless bodies, and vowed never to darken their door again. His vow he could not keep if he were also to keep his word with Adam, and he deferred the fulfilment of his promise; but from that day he left Lague as a home, and pitched his tent with old Davy Kerruish in Maughold village, at a little cottage by the Sundial that stood by the gates of the church. Too old for the sea, and now too saintly for smuggling, Davy pottered about the churchyard as gravedigger—for Maughold had then no sexton—with a living of three and sixpence a service, and a marvelously healthy parish. So the coming of Jason to share bed and board with him was a wild whirl of the wheel of fortune, and straightway he engaged an ancient body at ninepence a week to cook and clean for them.

By this time Jason had spent nearly half his money, for he had earned nothing, but now he promptly laid his idle habits aside. No more did he go up to the mountains, and no longer out on to the sea. His nets were thrown over the lath of the ceiling, his decoy was put in a cage, his fowling-piece stood in the corner, and few were the birds that hung at his belt. He was never seen at the "Hibernian," and he rarely scented up the house with tobacco smoke. On his first coming he lay two days and nights in bed without food or sleep, until Davy thought surely he was sick, and, willy-nilly, was for having his feet bathed in mustard and hot water, and likewise his stomach in rum and hot gruel. But he was only settling his plans for the future, and having hit on a scheme he leaped out of bed like a greyhound, plunged his head up to the neck in a bucket of cold water, came out of it with gleaming eyes, red cheeks, and a vapor rising from his wet skin, and drying himself with a whir on a coarse towel, he laid hold with both hands of a chunk of the last hare he had snared, and munched it in vast mouthfuls.

"Davy," he cried, with the white teeth still going, "are there many corn mills this side of the island?"

"Och, no, boy," said Davy; "but scarce as fresh herrings at Christmas."

"Any mill nearer than old Moore's at Sulby, and Carlow's wife's down at Laxey?"

"Aw, no, boy, the like of them isn't in."

"Any call for them nearer, Davy?"

"Aw 'deed, yes, boy, yes; and the farmer men alwis keen for one in Maughold, too. Ay, yes, keen, boy, keen; and if a man was after building one here they'd be thinking diamonds of him."

"Then why hasn't somebody set up a mill before now, Davy?"

"Well, boy, ye see a Manxman is just the cleverest of all the people goin' at takin' things aisy. Aw, clever at it, boy, clever!"

There is a full stream of water that tumbles into the sea over the brows of Port-y-Vullin, after singing its way down from the heights of Barrule. Jason had often marked it as he came and went from the hut of Stephen Orry that contained his stuffed birds, and told himself what a fine site it was for anybody that wanted to build a water mill. He remembered it now with a freshened interest, and bowling away to Mrs. Fairbrother at Lague for the purchase of a rod of the land that lay between the road and the beach, to the Bailiff for the right of water, and to old Coobragh for the hire of a cart to fetch stones from the screes where the mountains quarried them, he was soon in the thick of his enterprise.

He set the carpenter to work at his wheel, the smith at his axle, and the mason at his stones, but for the walls and roof of the mill itself he had no help but old Davy's. Early and late, from dawn to dusk, he worked at his delving and walling, and when night fell in he leaned over the hedge and smoked and measured out with his eye the work he meant to do next day. When his skill did not keep pace with his ardor he lay a day in bed thinking hard, and then got up and worked yet harder. In less than two months he had his first roof-timbers well and safely pitched, and if he went no farther it was because the big hope wherewith his simple heart had been buoyed up came down with a woful crash.

"Aw, smart and quick, astonishin'," said old Davy of Jason to Mrs. Fairbrother at Lague. "Aw 'deed, yes, and clever too, and steady still. The way he works them walls is grand. I'll go bail the farming men will be thinking diamonds of him when he makes a start."

"And then I wouldn't doubt but he'll be in the way of making a fortune, too," said Mrs. Fairbrother.

"I wouldn't trust, I wouldn't trust," said Davy.

"And he'll be thinking of marrying, I suppose. Isn't he, Davy?" said Mrs. Fairbrother.

"Marrying, is it?" said Davy; "aw, divil a marry, ma'am. The boy's innocent. Aw, yes, innocent as a baby."

Mrs. Fairbrother had her own good reasons for thinking otherwise, though Jason came to Lague but rarely. So with hint and innuendo she set herself to see how Greeba stood toward the future she had planned for her. And Greeba was not slow to see her mother's serious drift under many a playful speech. She had spent cheerful hours at Lague since the sad surprise that brought her back. Little loth for the life of the farm, notwithstanding Ross's judgment, she had seemed to fall into its ways with content. Her mother's hints touched her not at all, for she only laughed at them with a little of her old gaiety; but one day within the first weeks she met Jason, and then she felt troubled. He was very serious, and spoke only of what he was doing, but before his grave face her gay friendliness broke down in an instant.

Hurrying home, she sat down and wrote a letter to Michael Sunlocks. Never a word had she heard from him since he left the island four years ago, so she made excuse of her father's going away to cover her unmaidenly act, and asked him to let her know if her father had arrived, and how he was and where, with some particulars of himself also, and whether he meant to come back to the Isle of Man, or had quite made his home in Iceland; with many a sly glance, too, at her own condition, such as her modesty could not forbear, but never a syllable about Jason, for a double danger held her silent on that head. This she despatched to him, realizing at length that she loved him, and that she must hear from him soon, or be lost to him forever.

And waiting for Michael's answer she avoided Jason. If she saw him on the road she cut across the fields, and if she came to the house she found something to take her out of the kitchen. He saw her purpose quickly, and his calm eyes saddened, and his strong face twitched, but he did not flinch; he went on with his work, steadily, earnestly, only with something less of heart, something less of cheer. Her mother saw it too, and then the playful hints changed to angry threats.

"What has he done?" said Mrs. Fairbrother.

"Nothing," said Greeba.

"Have you anything against him?"

"No."

"Then why are you driving him from the house?"

Greeba could make no answer.

"Are you thinking of some one else?"

Again Greeba was silent.

"I'll beg of you to mend your manners," cried Mrs. Fairbrother. "It's full time you were wedded and gone."

"But perhaps I don't wish to leave home," said Greeba.

"Tush!' said Mrs. Fairbrother. "The lad is well enough, and if he hasn't land he has some money, and is like to have more. I'll give you a week to think of it, and if he ever comes and speaks for you I'll ask you to give him his civil answer. You will be three and twenty come Martinmas, and long before your mother was as old as that she had a couple of your brothers to fend for."

"Some of my brothers are nearly twice my age, and you don't ask them to marry," said Greeba.

"That's a different matter," said Mrs. Fairbrother.

It turned out that the week was more than enough to settle the difference between Greeba and her mother, for in less time than that Mrs. Fairbrother was stricken down by a mortal illness. It was only a month since she had turned Adam from her door, but her time was already at hand, and more than he predicted had come to pass. She had grown old without knowing a day's illness; her body, like a rocky headland that gives no sign of the seasons, had only grown harder every year, with a face more deeply seamed; but when she fell it was at one blow of life's ocean. Three little days she had lost appetite, on the morning of the fourth day she had found a fever in a neglected cattle trough that had drained into the well, and before night she had taken her death-warrant.

She knew the worst, and faced it, but her terror was abject. Sixty-five years she had scraped and scratched, but her time was come. She had thought of nothing save her treasure, and there it lay, yet it brought her no solace.

Two days she tossed in agony, remembering the past, and the price she had paid, and made others to pay, for all that she had held so dear and must leave so soon, for now it was nothing worth. Then she sent for the parson, Parson Gell, who was still living, but very old. The good man came, thinking his mission was spiritual comfort, but Mrs. Fairbrother would hear nothing of that. As she had lived without God in the world, even so did she intend to die. But some things that had gone amiss with her in her eager race after riches she was minded to set right before her time came to go. In lending she had charged too high an interest; in paying she had withheld too much for money; in seizing for mortgage she had given too little grace. So she would repay before it was too late, for Death was opening her hands.

"Send for them all," she cried; "there's Kinvig of Ballagawne, and Corlett's widow at Ballacreggan, and Quirk of Claughbane, and

the children of Joughan the weaver at Sherragh Vane, and Tubman of Ginger Hall, and John-Billy-Bob at Cornah Glen, and that hard bargainer, old Kermode of Port-e-chee. You see, I remember them all, for I never forget anything. Send for them, and be quick fetching them, or it'll be waste of time for them to come."

"I'll do it, Mistress Fairbrother," mumbled the old parson through his toothless gums, "for right is right, and justice justice."

"Chut!" said Mrs. Fairbrother.

But the parson's deaf ears did not hear. "And, ah!" he said, "the things of this world seem worthless, do they not, when we catch a glimpse into eternity?"

"Less cry and more wool," said Mrs. Fairbrother, dryly. "I wouldn't trust but old as you are you'd look with more love on a guinea than the Gospel calls for."

The people answered the parson's summons quickly enough, and came to Lague next morning, the men in their rough beavers, the old women in their long blue cloaks, and they followed the old parson into Mrs. Fairbrother's room, whispering among themselves, some in a doleful voice, others in an eager one, some with a cringing air, and others with an arrogant expression. The chamber was darkened by a heavy curtain over the window, but they could see Mrs. Fairbrother propped up by pillows, whereon her thin, pinched, faded face showed very white. She had slept never a moment of the night; and through all the agony of her body her mind had been busy with its reckonings. These she had made Greeba to set down in writing, and now with the paper on the counterpane before her, and a linen bag of money in her hand, she sat ready to receive her people. When they entered there was deep silence for a moment, wherein her eyes glanced over them, as they stood in their strong odors of health around her.

"Where's your brother, Liza Joughan?" she said to a young woman at the foot of the bed.

"Gone off to 'Meriky, ma'am," the girl faltered, "for he couldn't live after he lost the land."

"Where's Quirk of Claughbane?" asked Mrs. Fairbrother, turning to the parson.

"The poor man's gone, sister," said the parson, in a low tone. "He died only the week before last."

Mrs. Fairbrother's face assumed a darker shade, and she handed the paper to Greeba.

"Come, let's have it over," she said, and then, one by one, Greeba read out the names.

"Daniel Kinvig, twelve pounds," Greeba read, and thereupon an elderly man with a square head stepped forward.

"Kinvig," said Mrs. Fairbrother, fumbling the neck of the linen bag, "you borrowed a hundred pounds for two years, and I charged you twelve per cent. Six per cent. was enough, and here is the difference back to your hand."

So saying, she counted twelve pound notes and held them out in her wrinkled fingers, and the man took them without a word.

"Go on," she cried, sharply.

"Mrs. Corlett, two pounds," read Greeba, and a woman in a widow's cap and a long cloak came up, wiping her eyes.

"Bella Corlett," said Mrs. Fairbrother, "when I took over Ballacreggan for my unpaid debt, you begged for the feather bed your mother died on and the chair that had been your father's. I didn't give them, though I had enough besides, so here are two pounds to you, and God forgive me."

The woman took the money and began to cry.

"God reward you," she whimpered. "It's in Heaven you'll be rewarded, ma'am."

But Mrs. Fairbrother brushed her aside, with an angry word and a fretful gesture, and called on Greeba for the next name on the list.

"Peter Kermode, twenty-four pounds ten shillings," read Greeba, and a little old man, with a rough head and a grim, hard, ugly face, jostled through the people about him.

"Kermode," said Mrs. Fairbrother, "you always tried to cheat me, as you try to cheat everybody else, and when you sold me those seventy sheep for six shillings apiece last back end you thought they were all taking the rot, and you lost thirty pounds by them and brought yourself to beggary, and serve you right, too. But I sold them safe and sound for a pound apiece three days after; so here's half of the difference, and just try to be honest for the rest of your days. And it won't be a long task, either, for it's plain to see you're not far from death's door, and it isn't worth while to be a blood-sucker."

At that she paused for breath, and to press her lean hand over the place of the fire in her chest.

"Ye say thrue, ma'am, aw, true, true," said the man, in a lamentable voice. "And in the house of death it must be a great consolation to do right. Let's sing wi' ye, ma'am. I'm going in the straight way myself now, and plase the Lord I'll backslide no more."

And while he counted out the money in his grimy palm, the old hypocrite was for striking up a Ranter hymn, beginning:

"Oh, this is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable friend."

But Mrs. Fairbrother cried on him to be silent, and then gathering strength she went on with the others until all were done. And passing to each his money, as the grasp of Death's own hand relaxed the hard grip of her tight fingers, she trembled visibly, held it out and drew it back again, and held it out again, as though she were reluctant to part with it even yet.

And when all was over she swept the people out of the room with a wave of her hand, and fell back to the bolster.

Then Greeba, thinking it a favorable moment to plead for her father, mentioned his name, and eyed her mother anxiously. Mrs. Fairbrother seemed not to hear at first, and, being pressed, she answered wrathfully, saying she had no pity for her husband, and that not a penny of her money should go to him.

But late the same day, after the doctor, who had been sent for from Douglas, had wagged his head and made a rueful face over her, she called for her sons, and they came and stood about her, and Greeba, who had nursed her from the beginning, was also by her side.

"Boys," she said, between fits of pain, "keep the land together, and don't separate; and mind you bring no women here or you'll fall to quarreling, and if any of you must marry let him have his share and go. Don't forget the heifer that's near to calving, and see that you fodder her every night. Fetch the geese down from Barrule at Martinmas, and count the sheep on the mountains once a week, for the people of Maughold are the worst thieves in the island."

They gave her their promise duly to do and not to do what she had named, and, being little used to such scenes, they grew uneasy and began to shamble out.

"And, boys, another thing," she said, faintly, stretching her wrinkled hand across the counterpane, "give the girl her rights, and let her marry whom she will."

This, also, they promised her; and then she, thinking her duty done as an honest woman toward man and the world, but recking nothing of higher obligations, lay backward with a groan.

Now did it not need that the men should marry in order that they might quarrel, for hardly was the breath out of their mother's body when they set to squabbling, without any woman to help them.

Asher grumbled that Thurstan was drunken, Thurstan grumbled that Asher was lazy, Asher retorted that, being the eldest son, if he had his rights he would have every foot of the land, and Ross and Stean arose in fury at the bare thought of either being hinds on their brother's farm or else taking the go-by at his hands. So they quarreled, until Jacob said that there was plainly but one way of peace between them, and that was to apportion the land into equal parts and let every man take his share, and then the idleness of Asher and the drunkenness of Thurstan would be to each man his own affair. At that they remembered that the lands of Lague, then the largest estate on the north of the island, had once been made up of six separate farms, with a house to each of them, though five of the six houses had long stood empty. And seeing that there were just six of themselves, it seemed, as Jacob said, as if Providence had so appointed things, to see them out of their difficulty. But the farms, though of pretty equal acreage, were of various quality of land, and therein the quarreling set in afresh.

"I'll take Ballacraine," said Thurstan.

"No, but I'll take it," said Jacob, "for I've always worked the meadows."

In the end they cast lots, and then, each man having his farm assigned to him, all seemed to be settled when Asher cried:

"But what about the girl?"

At that they looked stupidly into each other's faces, for never once in all their bickering had they given a thought to Greeba. But Jacob's resource was not yet at an end, for he suggested that Asher should keep her at Lague, and at harvest the other five should give her something, and that her keep and their gifts together should be her share; and if she had all she needed what more could she wish?

They did not consult Greeba on this head, and before she had time to protest they were in the thick of a fresh dispute among themselves. The meadow lands of Ballacraine had fallen to Jacob after all, while Thurstan got the high and stony lands of Ballafayle, at the foot of Barrule. Thurstan was less than satisfied, and remembering that Jacob had drawn out the papers for the lottery, he suspected cheating. So he made himself well and thoroughly drunk at the "Hibernian," and set off for Ballacraine to argue the question out. He found Jacob in no mood for words of recrimination, and so he proceeded to thrash him, and to turn him off the fat lands and settle himself upon them.

Then there was great commotion among the Fairbrothers, and each of the other four took a side in the dispute. The end of it

all was a trial for ejectment at Deemster's Court at Ramsey, and another for assault and battery. The ejectment came first and Thurstan was ousted, and then six men of Maughold got up in the juror's box to try the charge of assault. There was little proof but a multitude of witnesses, and before all were heard the Deemster adjourned the court for lunch and ventilation, for the old courthouse had become poisonous with the reeking breath of the people that crowded it.

And the jury being free to lunch where they pleased, each of the parties to the dispute laid hold of his man and walked him off by himself, to persuade him, also to treat him, and perhaps to bribe him. Thus Thurstan was at the Saddle Inn with a juryman on either hand, and Jacob was at the Plow with as many by his side, and Ross and Stean had one each at the tavern by the Cross. "You're right," said the jurymen to Thurstan. "Drink up," said Thurstan to the jurymen. "I'm your man," said the jurymen to Jacob. "Slip this in your fob," said Jacob to the jurymen. Then they reeled back to the courthouse arm-in-arm, and when the six good men of Maughold had clambered up to their places again, the juror's box contained several quarts more ale than before.

The jury did not agree on a verdict, and the Deemster dismissed them with hot reproaches. But some justice to Greeba seemed likely to come of this wild farce of law, for an advocate, who had learned what her brothers were doing for her, got up a case against them, for lack of a better brief, and so far prevailed on her behalf that the Deemster ordered that each of the six should pay her eight pounds yearly, as an equivalent for the share of land they had unlawfully withheld.

Now Red Jason had spent that day among the crowd at the courthouse, and his hot blood had shown as red as his hair through his tanned cheeks, while he looked on at the doings of Thurstan of the swollen eyes, and Jacob of the foxy face. He stood up for a time at the back like a statue of wrath with a dirty mist of blood dancing before it. Then his loathing and scorn getting the better of him, he cursed beneath his breath in Icelandic and English, and his restless hands scraped in and out of his pockets as if they itched to fasten on somebody's throat, or pick up something as a dog picks up a rat. All he could do was to curl his lip in a terrible grin, like the grin of a mastiff, until he caught a sidelong glimpse of Greeba's face with the traces of tears upon it, and then, being unable to control any longer the unsatisfied yearning of his soul to throttle Jacob, and smash the ribs of Thurstan, and give dandified John a backhanded facer, he turned tail and slunk out of the place, as if

ashamed of himself that he was so useless. When all was over he stalked off to Port-y-Vullin, but, too nervous to settle to his work that day, he went away in the evening in the direction of Lague, not thinking to call there, yet powerless to keep away.

Greeba had returned from Ramsey alone, being little wishful for company, so heavy was her heart. She had seen how her brothers had tried to rob her, and how beggarly was the help the law could give her, for though the one might order the others might not obey. So she had sat herself down in her loneliness, thinking that she was indeed alone in all the world, with no one to look up to any more, and no strong hand to rest on. It was just then that Jason pushed open the door of the porch, and stood on the threshold, in all the quiet strength of his untainted young manhood, and the calm breadth of his simple manner.

"Greeba, may I come in?" he said, in a low tone.

"Yes," she answered, only just audibly, and then he entered.

She did not raise her eyes, and he did not offer his hand, but as he stood beside her she grew stronger, and as she sat before him he felt that a hard lump that had gathered at his heart was melting away.

"Listen to me, Greeba," he said. "I know all your troubles, and I'm very sorry for them. No, that's not what I meant to say, but I'm at a loss for words. Greeba!"

"Yes?"

"Doesn't it seem as if Fate meant us to come together—you and I? The world has dealt very ill with both of us thus far. But you are a woman and I am a man; and only give me the right to fight for you—"

As he spoke he saw the tears spring to her eyes, and he paused and his wandering fingers found the hand that hung by her side.

"Greeba!" he cried again, but she stopped the hot flow of the words that she saw were coming.

"Leave me now," she said. "Don't speak to me to-day; no, not to-day, Jason. Go—go!"

He obeyed her without a word, and picking up his cap from where it had fallen at his feet, he left her sitting there with her face covered by her hands.

She had suddenly bethought herself of Michael Sunlocks; that she had pledged her word to wait for him, that she had written to him and that his answer might come at any time. Next day she went down to the post-office at Ramsey to inquire for a letter. None had yet come for her, but a boat from the Shetlands that might fetch mails from Iceland would arrive within three days.

Prompt to that time she went down to Ramsey again, but though the boat had put into harbor and discharged its mails there was still no letter for her. The ordinary Irish trader between Dublin and Reykjavik was expected on its homeward trip in a week or nine days more, and Greeba's heart lay low and waited. In due course the trader came, but no letter for her came with it. Then her hope broke down. Sunlocks had forgotten her; perhaps he cared for her no longer; it might even be that he loved some one else. And so with the fall of her hope her womanly pride arose, and she asked herself very haughtily, but with the great tears in her big dark eyes, what it mattered to her after all. Only she was very lonely, and so weary and heart-sick, and with no one to look to for the cheer of life.

She was still at Lague, where her eldest brother was now sole master, and he was very cold with her, for he had taken it with mighty high dudgeon that a sister of his should have used the law against him. So, feeling how bitter it was to eat the bread of another, she had even begun to pinch herself of food, and to sit at meals but rarely.

But Jason came again about a fortnight after the trial, and he found Greeba alone as before. She was sitting by the porch, in the cool of the summer evening, combing out the plaits of her long brown hair, and looking up at Barrule, that was heaving out large and black in the sundown, with a nightcap of silver vapor over its head in the clouds.

"I can stay away no longer," he said, with his eyes down. "I've tried to stay away and can't, and the days creep along. So think no ill of me if I come too soon."

Greeba made him no answer, but thought within herself that if he had stayed a day longer he must have stayed a day too long.

"It's a weary heart I've borne," he said, "since I saw you last, and you bade me leave you, and I obeyed, though it cost me dear. But let that go."

Still she did not speak, and looking up into her face he saw how pale she was, and weak and ill as he thought.

"Greeba," he cried, "what has happened?"

But she only smiled and gave him a look of kindness, and said that nothing was amiss with her.

"Yes, by the Lord, but something *is* amiss," he said, with his blood in his face in an instant. "What is it?" he cried. "What is it?"

"Only that I have not eaten much to-day," she said, "that's all."

"All!" he cried. "All!"

He seemed to understand everything at a glance, as if the great power of his love had taught him.

"Now, by God—" he said, and shook his fist at the house in front of him.

"Hush!" Greeba whispered, "it is my own doing. I am loth to be beholden to any one, least of all to such as forget me."

The sweet tenderness of her look softened him, and he cast down his eyes again, and said:

"Greeba, there is one who can never forget you; morning and night you are with him, for he loves you dearly; ay, Greeba, as never maiden was loved by any one since the world began. No, there isn't the man born, Greeba, who loves a woman as he loves you, for he has nothing else to love in all the wide world."

She looked up at him as he spoke and saw the courage in his eyes, and that he who loved her stood as a man beside her. At that her heart swelled and her eyes began to fill, and he saw her tears and knew that he had won her, and he plucked her to his breast with a wild cry of joy, and she lay there and wept, while he whispered to her through her hair:

"My love! my love! love of my life!" he whispered.

"I was so lonely," she murmured.

"You shall be lonely no more," he whispered; "no more, my love, no more," and his soft words stole over her drooping head.

He stayed an hour longer by her side, laughing much and talking greatly, and when he went off she heard him break into a song as he passed out at the gate.

Then, being once more alone, she sat and tried to compose herself, wondering if she should ever repent what she had done so hastily, and if she could love this man as he well deserved and would surely wish. Her meditations were broken by the sound of Jason's voice. He was coming back with his happy step, and singing as merrily as he went.

"What a blockhead I am," he said, cheerily, popping his head in at the door. "I forgot to deliver you a letter that the postmaster gave me when I was at Ramsey this morning. You see it's from Iceland. Good news from your father, I trust. God bless him!"

So saying he pushed the letter into Greeba's hand and went his way jauntily, singing as before a gay song of his native country.

The letter was from Michael Sunlocks.

CHAPTER IV

THE RISE OF MICHAEL SUNLOCKS

"Dear Greeba," the letter ran, "I am sorely ashamed of my long silence, which is deeply ungrateful toward your father, and very ungracious toward you. Though something better than four years have passed away since I left the little green island, the time has seemed to fly more swiftly than a weaver's shuttle, and I have been immersed in many interests and beset by many anxieties. But I well know that nothing can quite excuse me, and I would wrong the truth if I were to say that among fresh scenes and fresh faces I have borne about me day and night the memory of all I left behind. So I shall not pretend to a loyalty whereof I have given you no assurance, but will just pray of you to take me for what I truly am—a rather thankless fellow—who has sometimes found himself in danger of forgetting old friends in the making of new ones, and been very heartily ashamed of himself. Nevertheless, the sweetest thoughts of these four years have been thoughts of the old home, and the dearest hope of my heart has been to return to it some day. That day has not yet come; but it is coming, and now I seem to see it very near. So, dear Greeba, forgive me if you can, or at least bear me no grudge, and let me tell you of some of the strange things that have befallen me since we parted.

"When I came to Iceland it was not to join the Latin school of the venerable Bishop Petersen (a worthy man and good Christian, whom it has become my happiness to call my friend), but on an errand of mercy, whereof I may yet say much but can tell you little now. The first of my duties was to find a good woman and true wife who had suffered deeply by the great fault of another, and, having found her, to succor her in her distress. It says much for the depth of her misfortunes that, though she had been the daughter of the Governor-General, and the inhabitants of the capital of Iceland are fewer than two thousand in all, I was more than a week in Reykjavik before I came upon any real news of her. When I found her at last she was in her grave. The poor soul had died within two months of my landing on these shores, and the joiner of the cathedral was putting a little wooden peg, inscribed with the initials of her name, over her grave in the forgotten quarter of

the cemetery where the dead poor of this place are buried. Such was the close of the first chapter of my quest.

"But I had still another duty, and, touched by the pathos of that timeless death, I set about it with new vigor. This was to learn if the unhappy soul had left a child behind her, and if she had done so to look for it as I had looked for its mother, and succor it as I would have succored her. I found that she had left a son, a lad of my own age or thereabouts, and therefore less than twenty at that time. Little seemed to be known about him, save that he had been his mother's sole stay and companion, that they had both lived apart from their neighbors, and much under the shadow of their distresses. At her death he had been with her, and he had stood by her grave, but never afterward had he been seen by any one who could make a guess as to what had become of him. But, while I was still in the midst of my search, the body of a young man came ashore on the island of Engy, and though the features were no longer to be recognized, yet there were many in the fishing quarter of this city who could swear, from evidences of stature and of clothing, to its identity with him I looked for; and thus the second chapter of my quest seemed to close at a tomb.

"I can not say that I was fully satisfied, for nothing that I had heard of the boy's character seemed to agree with any thought of suicide, and I noticed that the good old Lutheran priest who had sat with the poor mother in her last hours shook his head at the mention of it, though he would give no reasons for his determined unbelief. But perhaps my zeal was flagging, for my search ceased from that hour, and as often since as my conscience has reproached me with a mission unfulfilled I have appeased it with the assurance that mother and son are both gone, and death itself has been my sure abridgment.

"Some day, dear Greeba, I will tell you who sent me (which you may partly guess) and who they were to whom I was sent. But it is like the way of the world itself, that, having set ourselves a task, we must follow it as regularly as the sun rises and sets, and the day comes and the night follows, or once letting it slip it will drop into a chaos. For a thing happened just at that moment of my wavering which altered the current of my life, so that my time here, which was to be devoted to an unselfish work, seems to have been given up to personal ambitions.

"I have mentioned that the good woman had been the daughter of the Governor-General. His name was Jorgen Jorgensen. He had turned her adrift because of her marriage, which was in defiance of his wish, and through all the years of her poverty he

had either abandoned her to her necessities, or her pride had hidden them from his knowledge. But he had heard of her death when it came to pass, and by that time his stubborn spirit had begun to feel the lonesomeness of his years, and that life was slipping past him without the love and tenderness of a child to sweeten it. So partly out of remorse, but mainly out of selfishness, he had set out to find the son whom his daughter had left behind her, thinking to give the boy the rightful place of a grandson by his side. It was then that on the same search our paths converged, and Jorgen Jorgensen met with me, and I with Jorgen Jorgensen. And when the news reached Reykjavik of the body that had come out of the sea at Engy, the Governor was among the first to give credence to the rumor that the son of his daughter was dead. But meantime he had found something in me to interest him, and now he asked who I was, and what and why I was come. His questions I answered plainly, without concealment or any disguise, and when he heard that I was the son of Stephen Orry, though he knew too well what my father had been to him and to his daughter (all of which, dear Greeba, you shall yet learn at length), he asked me to take that place in his house that he had intended for his daughter's son.

"How I came to agree to this while I distrusted him and almost feared him would take too long to tell. Only remember that I was in a country foreign to me, though it was my father's home, that I was trifling with my errand there, and had no solid business of life beside. Enough for the present that I did so agree, and that I became the housemate and daily companion of Jorgen Jorgensen. His treatment of me varied with his moods, which were many. Sometimes it was harsh, sometimes almost genial, and always selfish. I think I worked for him as a loyal servant should, taking no account of his promises, and never shutting my eyes to my true position or his real aims in having me. And often and again when I remembered all that we both knew of what had gone before, I thought the Fates themselves must shriek at the turn of fortune's wheel that had thrown this man and me together so.

"I say he was selfish; and truly he did all he could in the years I was with him to drain me of my best strength of heart and brain," but some of his selfish ends seemed to lie in the way of my own advancement. Thus he had set his mind on my succeeding him in the governorship, or at least becoming Speaker, and to that end he had me elected to the Althing, a legislative body very like to the House of Keys, violating thereby more than one regulation touching my age, nationality, and period of residence in Iceland. There he made his first great error in our relations, for while I was

a servant in his house and office my mind and will were his, but when I became a delegate they became my own, in charge for the people who elected me.

"It would be a long story to tell you of all that occurred in the three years thereafter; how I saw many a doubtful scheme hatched under my eyes without having the power or right to protest while I kept the shelter of the Governor's roof; how I left his house and separated from him; how I pursued my way apart from him, supported by good men who gathered about me; how he slandered and maligned and injured me through my father, whom all had known, and my mother, of whom I myself had told him; how in the end he prompted the Danish Government to propose to the Althing a new constitution for Iceland, curtailing her ancient liberties and violating her time-honored customs, and how I led the opposition to this unworthy project and defeated it. The end of all is that within these two months Iceland has risen against the rule of Denmark as administered by Jorgen Jorgensen, driving him away, and that I, who little thought to sit in his place even in the days when he himself was plotting to put me there, and would have fled from the danger of pushing from his stool the man whose bread I had eaten, am at this moment president of a new Icelandic Republic.

"It will seem to you a strange climax that I am where I am after so short a life here, coming as a youth and a stranger only four years ago, without a livelihood and with little money (though more I might perhaps have had), on a vague errand, scarcely able to speak the language of the people, and understanding it merely from the uncertain memories of childhood. And if above the pleasures of a true patriotism—for I am an Icelander, too, proud of the old country and its all but thousand years—there is a secret joy in my cup of fortune, the sweetest part of it is that there are those —there is one—in dear little Ellan Vannin who will, I truly think, rejoice with me and be glad. But I am too closely beset by the anxieties that have come with my success to give much thought to its vanities. Thus in this first lull after the storm of our revolution, I have to be busy with many active preparations. Jorgen Jorgensen has gone to Copenhagen, where he will surely incite the Danish Government to reprisals, though a powerful State might well afford to leave to its freedom the ancient little nation that lives on a great rock of the frozen seas. In view of this certainty, I have to organize some native forces of defense, both on land and sea. One small colony of Danish colonists who took the side of the Danish powers has had to be put down by force, and I have re-

moved the political prisoners from the jail of Reykjavik, where they did no good, to the sulphur mines at Krisuvik, where they are opening an industry that should enrich the State. So you see that my hands are full of anxious labor, and that my presence here seems necessary now. But if, as sanguine minds predict, all comes out well in the end, and Denmark leaves us to ourselves, or the powers of Europe rise against Denmark, and Iceland remains a free nation, I will not forget that my true home is in the dear island of the Irish Sea, and that good souls are there who remember me and would welcome me, and that one of them was my dear little playfellow long ago.

"And now, dear Greeba, you know what has happened to me since we parted on that sweet night at the gate of Lague, but I know nothing of all that has occurred to you. My neglect has been well punished by my ignorance and my many fears.

"How is your father? Is the dear man well, and happy, and prosperous? He must be so, or surely there is no Providence dispensing justice in this world.

"Are you well? To me the years have sent a tawny beard and a woful lantern jaw. Have they changed you greatly? Yet how can you answer such a question? Only say that you are well, and have been always well, and I will know the rest, dear Greeba—that the four years past have only done what the preceding eight years did, in ripening the bloom of the sweetest womanhood, in softening the dark light of the most glorious eyes, and in smoothing the dimples of the loveliest face that ever the sun of Heaven shone upon.

"But, thinking of this, and trying to summon up a vision of you as you must be now, it serves me right that I am tortured by fears I dare not utter. What have you been doing all this time? Have you made any new friends? I have made many, yet none that seem to have got as close to me as the old ones are. One old friend, the oldest I can remember, though young enough yet for beauty and sweet grace, is still the closest to my heart. Do you know whom I mean? Greeba, do you remember your promise? You could hardly speak to make it. I had forgotten my manners so that I had left you little breath. Have you forgotten? To me it is a delicious memory, and if it is not a painful one to you, then all is well with both of us. But, oh, for the time to come, when many a similar promise, and many a like breach of manners, will wipe away the thought of this one! I am almost in love with myself to think it was I who stood with you by the bridge at Lague, and could find it in my heart, if it were only in my power, to kiss

the lips that kissed you. I'll do better than that some day. What say you? But say nothing, for that's best, dearest. Ah, Greeba—"

At this point there was a break in the letter, and what came after was in a larger, looser, and more rapid handwriting.

"Your letter has this moment reached me. I am overwhelmed by the bad news you send me. Your father has not yet come. Did his ship sail for Reykjavik? Or was it for Hafnafjord? Certainly it may have put in at the Orkneys, or the Faroes. But if it sailed a fortnight before you wrote, it ought to be here now. I will make inquiries forthwith.

"I interrupted my letter to send a boat down the fiord to look. It is gone. I can see it now skirting the Smoky Harbor on its way to the Smoky Point. If your father comes back with it, he shall have a thousand, thousand welcomes. The dear good man—how well I remember that on the day I parted from him he rallied me on my fears, and said he would yet come here to see me! Little did he think to come like this. And the worst of his misfortunes have followed on his generosities! Such big-hearted men should have a store like the widow's cruse to draw from, that would grow no less, however often they dipped into it. God keep him till we meet again and I hold once more that hand of charity and blessing, or have it resting on my head.

"I am anxious on your account also, dearest Greeba, for I know too well what your condition must be in your mother's house. My dear girl, forgive me for what I send you with this letter. The day I left the island your father lent me fifty pounds, and now I repay it to his daughter. So it is not a gift, and, if it were, you should still take it from me, seeing there are no obligations among those who love.

"The duties that hold me here are now for the first time irksome, for I am longing for the chance of hastening to your side. But only say that I may do so with your consent and all that goes with it, and I will not lose a day more in sending a trustworthy person to you who shall bring you here to rejoin your father and me. Write by the first ship that will bring your letter. I shall not rest until I have heard from you; and having heard in such words as my heart could wish, I shall not sleep until you are with me, never, never to be parted from me again as long as life itself shall last. Write, dearest girl—write—write."

Here there was another break in the letter, and then came this postscript.

"It is part of the penalty of life in these northern lands that for nearly one-half of the year we are entirely cut off from inter-

course with the rest of the world, and are at the mercy of wind and sea for that benefit during the other half. My letter has waited these seven days for the passing of a storm before the ship that is to carry it can sail. This interval has seen the return of the sloop that I sent down the fiord as far as Smoky Point, but no tidings has she brought back of the vessel your father sailed in, and no certain intelligence has yet reached me from any other quarter. So let me not alarm you when I add that a report has come to Reykjavik by a whaler on the seas under Snaefell that an Irish schooner has lately been wrecked near the mouth of some basaltic caves by Stappen, all hands being saved, but the vessel gone to pieces, and crew and passengers trying to make their way to the capital overland. I am afraid to fear, and as much afraid to hope, that this may have been the ship that brought your father; but I am fitting out an expedition to go along the coast to meet the poor ship-broken company, for whoever they are they can know little of the perils and privations of a long tramp across this desolate country. If more and better news should come my way you shall have it in its turn, but meantime bethink you earnestly whether it is not now for you to come and to join me, and your father also, if he should then be here, and, if not, to help me to search for him. But it is barely just to you to ask so much without making myself clear, though truly you must have guessed my meaning. Then, dear Greeba, when I say 'Come,' I mean *Come to be my wife.* It sounds cold to say it so, and such a plea is not the one my heart has cherished; for through all these years I have heard myself whisper that dear word through trembling lips, with a luminous vision of my own face in your beautiful eyes before me. But that is not to be, save in an aftermath of love, if you will only let the future bring it. So, dearest love, my darling—more to me than place and power and all the world can give—come to me—come—come—come."

CHAPTER V

STRONG KNOTS OF LOVE

Now never did a letter bring more contrary feelings to man or maid than this one of Michael Sunlocks brought to Greeba. It thrilled her with love, it terrified her with fear; it touched her with delight, it chilled her with despair; it made her laugh, it made her weep; she kissed it with quivering lips, she dropped it from

trembling fingers. But in the end it swept her heart and soul away with it, as it must have swept away the heart and soul of any maiden who ever loved, and she leaped at the thought that she must go to Sunlocks and to her father at once, without delay—not waiting to write, or for the messenger that was to come.

Yet the cooler moment followed, when she remembered Jason. She was pledged to him; she had given him her promise; and if she broke her word she would break his heart. But Sunlocks—Sunlocks—Sunlocks! She could hear his low, passionate voice in the words of his letter. Jason she had loved for his love of her; but Sunlocks she had loved of her love alone.

What was she to do? Go to Sunlocks, and thereby break her word and the heart of Jason, or abide by Jason, and break her own heart and the hope of Sunlocks? "Oh," she thought, "if the letter had but come a day earlier—one little day—nay, one hour—one little, little hour!" Then, in her tortured mind, she reproached Jason for keeping it back from her by his forgetfulness, and at the next instant she reproached Sunlocks for his tardy despatch, and last of all she reproached herself for not waiting for it. "Oh," she thought, "was ever a girl born to bring such misery to those who love her!"

All the long night thereafter she tossed in restless doubt, never once closing her eyes in sleep; and at daybreak she rose and dressed, and threw open her window, and cool waves of morning air floated down upon her from the mountains, where the bald crown of Barrule was tipped with rosy light from the sun that was rising over the sea. Then, in the stillness of the morning, before the cattle in the meadows had begun to low, or the sheep on the hills to bleat, and there was yet no noise of work in the rickyard or the shippon, and all the moorland below lay asleep under its thin coverlet of mist, there came to her from across the fields the sound of a happy, cheery voice that was singing. She listened, and knew that it was Jason, chanting a song of Iceland after a night spent on the mountains; and she looked and saw that he was coming on toward the house, with his long, swinging stride and leap, over gorse and cushag and hedge and ditch.

It was more than she could bear after such night-long torment, to look upon the happiness she seemed about to wreck, so she turned her head away and covered her ears with her hands. But, recking nothing of this, Jason came on, singing in snatches and whistling by turns, until his firm tread echoed in the paved courtyard in the silence that was broken by nothing beside, except the wakening of the rooks in the elms.

"She must be awake, for she lies there, and her window is open," he thought to himself.

"Whisht!" he cried, tossing up a hand.

And then, without moving from where she stood, with her back resting against the window shutter, she turned her head about and her eyes aslant, and saw him beneath her casement. He looked buoyant and joyous, and full of laughter. A gun was over his shoulder, a fishing rod was in the other hand, at his belt hung a brace of birds, with the blood dripping on to his leggings, and across his back swung a little creel.

"Greeba, whisht!" he called again, in a loud whisper; and a third time he called her.

Then, though her heart smote her sore, she could not but step forward; and perhaps her very shame made her the more beautiful at that moment, for her cheeks were rosy red, and her round neck drooped, and her eyes were shy of the morning light, and very sweet she looked to the lad who loved her there.

"Ah!" he said almost inaudibly, and drew a long breath. Then he made pretense to kiss her, though so far out of reach, and laughed in his throat. After that he laid his gun against the porch, and untied the birds and threw them down at the foot of the closed door.

"I thought I would bring you these," he said. "I've just shot them."

"Then you've not been to bed," said Greeba nervously.

"Oh, that's nothing," he said, laughing. "Nothing for me. Besides, how could I sleep? Sleep? Why I should have been ready to kill myself this morning if I could have slept last night. Greeba!"

"Well!"

"You could never think what a glorious night it has been for me."

"So you've had good sport?" she said, feeling ashamed.

"Sport!" he cried, and laughed again. "Oh, yes; I've had sport enough," he said. "But what a night it was! The happiest night of all my life. Every star that shone seemed to shine for me; every wind that blew seemed to bring me a message; and every bird that sang, as the day was dawning, seemed to sing the song of all my happiness. Oh, it has been a triumphant night, Greeba."

She turned her head away from him, but he did not stop.

"And this morning, coming down from Barrule, everything seemed to speak to me of one thing, and that was the dearest thing in all the world. 'Dear little river,' I said, 'how happily you sing your

way to the sea.' And then I remembered that before it got there it would turn the wheel for us at Port-y-Vullin some day, and so I said, 'Dear little mill, how merrily you'll go when I listen to your plash and plunge, with her I love beside me."

She did not speak, and after a moment he laughed.

"That's very foolish, isn't it?" he said.

"Oh, no," she said. "Why foolish?"

"Well, it sounds so; but, ah, last night the stars around me on the mountain top seemed like a sanctuary, and this morning the birds among the gorse were like a choir, and all sang together, and away to the roof their word rang out—Greeba! Greeba! Greeba!"

He could hear a faint sobbing.

"Greeba!"

"Yes?"

"You are crying."

"Am I? Oh, no! No, Jason, not that."

"I must go. What a fool I am," he muttered, and picked up his gun.

"Oh, no; don't say that."

"Greeba!"

"Well, Jason?"

"I'm going now, but—"

"Why?"

"I'm not my own man this morning. I'm talking foolishly."

"Well, and do you think a girl doesn't like foolishness?"

He threw his head back and laughed at the blue sky. "But I'm coming back for you in the evening. I am to get the last of my rafters on to-day, and when a building is raised it's a time to make merry."

He laughed again with a joyous lightness, and turned to go, and she waved her hand to him as he passed out of the gate. Then, one, two, three, four, his strong rhythmic steps went off behind the elms, and then he was gone, and the early sun was gone with him, for its brightness seemed to have died out of the air.

And being alone Greeba knew why she had tried to keep Jason by her side, for while he was with her the temptation was not strong to break in upon his happiness, but when he was no longer there, do what she would, she could not but remember Michael Sunlocks.

"Oh, what have I done that two brave men should love me?" she thought; but none the less for that her heart clamored for Sunlocks. Sunlocks, Sunlocks, Sunlocks, always Sunlocks—the

Sunlocks of her childhood, her girlhood, her first womanhood—Sunlocks of the bright eyes and the smile like sunshine.

And thinking again of Jason, and his brave ways, and his simple, manly bearing, and his plain speech so strangely lifted out of itself that day into words with wings, she only told herself that she was about to break his heart, and that to see herself do it would go far to break her own. So she decided that she would write to him, and then slip away as best she could, seeing him no more.

At that resolve she sat and wrote four pages of pleading and prayer and explanation. But having finished her letter, it smote her suddenly, as she folded and sealed it, that it would be a selfish thing to steal away without warning, and leave this poor paper behind her to crush Jason, for though written in pity for him, in truth it was fraught with pity only for herself. As mean of soul as that she could not be, and straightway she threw her letter aside, resolved to tell her story face to face. Then she remembered the night of Stephen Orry's death, and the white lips of Jason as he stood above the dying man—his father whom he had crossed the seas to slay—and, again, by a quick recoil, she recalled his laughter of that morning, and she said within herself, "If I tell him, he will kill me."

But that thought decided her, and she concluded that tell him she must, let happen what would. So partly in the strength of her resolve, and partly out of its womanly weakness, and the fear that she might return to her first plan at last, she took up her own letter to Jason, and locked it in a chest. Then taking from the folds at her breast the letter of Sunlocks to herself, she read it again, and yet again, for it was the only love letter she had ever received, and there was a dear delight in the very touch of it. But the thought of that sensuous joy smote her conscience when she remembered what she had still to do, and thinking that she could never speak to Jason eye to eye, with the letter of Sunlocks lying warm in her bosom, she took it out, and locked it also in the chest.

Jason came back at sundown to fetch her away that they might make some innocent sport together because his mill was roofed. Then with her eyes on her feet she spoke, and he listened in a dull, impassive silence, while all the laughter died off his face and a look of blank pallor came over it And when she had finished, she waited for the blow of his anger, but it did not come.

"Then all is over between us," he said with an effort.

And looking up, she saw that he was a forlorn man in a moment, and fell to her knees before him with many pitiful prayers for forgiveness. But he only raised her and said gently:

"Mistress Greeba, maybe I haven't loved you enough."

"No, no," she cried.

"I'm only a rough and ignorant fellow, a sort of wild beast, I dare say, not fit to touch the hand of a lady, and maybe a lady could never stoop to me."

"No, no, there's not a lady in all the world would stoop if she were to marry you."

"Then maybe I vexed you by finding my own advantage in your hour of need."

"No, you have behaved bravely with me in my trouble."

"Then, Greeba, tell me what has happened since yesterday."

"Nothing—everything. Jason, I have wronged you. It is no fault of yours, but now I know I do not love you."

He turned his face away from her, and when he spoke again his voice broke in his throat.

"You could never think how fast and close my love will grow. Let us wait," he said.

"It would be useless," she answered.

"Stay," he said stiffly, "do you love any one else?"

But before she had time to speak, he said quickly:

"Wait! I've no right to ask that question, and I will not hear you answer it."

"You are very noble, Jason," she said.

"I was thinking of myself," he said.

"Jason," she cried: "I meant to ask you to release me, but you have put me to shame and now I ask you to choose for me. I have promised myself to you, and if you wish it I will keep my promise."

At that he stood, a sorrowful man, beside her for a moment's space before he answered her, and only the tones of his voice could tell how much his answer cost him:

"No—ah, no," he said; "no, Greeba, to keep your promise to me would be too cruel to you."

"Think of yourself now," she cried.

"There's no need to do that," he said, "for either way I am a broken man. But you shall not also be broken-hearted, and neither shall the man who parts us."

Saying this, a ghastly white hand seemed to sweep across his face, but at the next moment he smiled feebly and said, "God bless you both."

Then he turned to go, but Greeba caught him by both hands.

"Jason," she murmured, "it is true I can not love you, but if there was another name for love that is not—"

He twisted back to her as she spoke, and his face was unutterably mournful to see. "Don't look at me like that," he said, and drew away.

She felt her face flush deep, for she was ashamed. Love was her pole-star. What was Jason's? Only the blankness of despair.

"Oh, my heart will break," she cried. "Jason," she cried again, and again she grasped his hands, and again their eyes met, and then the brave girl put her quivering lips to his.

"Ah, no," he said, in a husky voice, and he broke from her embrace.

CHAPTER VI

ESAU'S BITTER CRY

SHRINKING from every human face, Jason turned in his dumb despair toward the sea, for the moan of its long dead waves seemed to speak to him in a voice of comfort if not of cheer. The year had deepened to autumn, and the chill winds that scattered the salt spray, the white curves of the breakers, the mists, the dapple-gray clouds, the scream of the sea-fowl, all suited with his mood, for at the fountains of his own being the great deeps were broken up.

It was Tuesday, and every day thereafter until Saturday he haunted the shore, the wild headland to seaward, and the lonesome rocks on the south. There, bit by bit, the strange and solemn idea of unrequited love was borne in upon him. It was very hard to understand. For one short day the image of a happy love had stood up before his mind, but already that day was dead. That he should never again clasp her hand whom he loved, that all was over between them—it was painful, it was crushing.

And oh! it was very cruel. His life seemed as much ended as if he had taken his death-warrant, for life without hope was nothing worth. The future he had fondly built up for both of them lay broken at his own feet. Oh, the irony of it all! There were moments when evil passions arose in his mind and startled him. Standing at the foot of the long crags of the sea he would break into wild peals of laughter, or shriek out in rebellion against his sentence. But he was ashamed of these impulses, and would slink away from the scene of them, though no human eye had there been on him, like a dog that is disgraced.

Yet he felt that like a man among men he could fight anything

but this relentless doom. Anything, anything—and he would not shrink. Life and love, life and love—only these, and all would be well. But no, ah! no, not for him was either; and creeping up in the dead of night toward Lague, just that his eyes might see, though sorrow dimmed them, the house where she lay asleep, the strong man would sob like a woman, and cry out: "Greeba! Greeba! Greeba!"

But with the coming of day his strength would return, and watching the big ships outside pass on to north and south, or listening to the merry song of the seamen who weighed anchor in the bay, he told himself sadly, but without pain, that his life in the island was ended, that he could not live where she lived, surrounded by the traces of her presence, that something called him away, and that he must go. And, having thus concluded, his spirits rose, and he decided to stay until after Sunday, thinking to see her then in church, and there take his last tender look of her and bid her farewell in silence, for he could not trust himself to speak.

So he passed what remained of his time until then without bitterness or gloom, saying within himself as often as he looked with bereaved eyes toward Lague, where it lay in the sunshine, "Live on, and be happy, for I wish you no ill. Live on, and the memory of all this will pass away."

But he did not in the meantime return to his work at the mill, which stood as he had left it on the Tuesday when the carpenter fixed the last of its roof timbers. This, with the general rupture of his habits of life, was the cause of sore worry and perplexity to his housemate.

"Aw, reg'lar bruk—bruk complete," old Davy said far and wide. "A while ago ye couldn' hould him for workin' at the mill, and now he's never puttin' a sight on it, and good goold waitin' for him; and showin' no pride—and what he's thinkin' of no one's knowin'."

Davy tried hard to sound the depth of Jason's trouble, but having no line to fathom it he had recourse to his excellent fancy.

"Aw, bless yer sowls, the thick as a haddick I was," he whispered one day, "and me wonderin' why, and wonderin' why, and the thing as plain as plain what's agate of the poor boy. It's divils that's took at him—divils in the head. Aw, yes, and two of them, for it's aisy to see there's fightin' goin' on inside of him. Aw, yes, same as they tell of in Revelations; and I've seen the like when I was sailin' forrin."

Having so concluded, old Davy thought it his duty to consult an old body that lived in a dark tangle of birchwood at Ballaglass.

"It's fit to make a man cry to see the way he's goin'," said he, "and a few good words can't do no harm any way."

The old woman agreed with Davy as to the cause of trouble, and said that Jason must be somebody after all, since what he had was a malady the quality was much subject to; for to her own knowledge the "Clerk o' the Rowls" had suffered from it when a little dancing girl from France had left suddenly for England. Yet she made no question but she could cure him, if Davy could contrive to hang about his neck while he slept a piece of red ribbon which she would provide.

It was not easy for Davy to carry out his instructions, so little did Jason rest, but he succeeded at length, and thought he remarked that Jason became calmer and better straightway.

"But bless me, I was wrong," said he. "It was four divils the poor boy had in his head; and two of them are gone, but the other two are agate of him still."

When Sunday morning came Jason made himself ready for church, and then lounged at the doorway of old Davy's cottage by the dial, to watch the people go in at the gate. And many hailed him as they went by in the sweet sunshine, and some observed among themselves that in a few days his face had grown thin. In twos and threes they passed, while Davy rang the bell from the open porch, and though Jason seemed not to heed any of them, yet he watched them one by one. Matt Mylechreest he saw, and Nary Crowe, now toothless and saintly, and Kane Wade, who had trudged down from Ballure, and his wife Bridget, grown wrinkled and yellow, and some bright young maidens, too, who gave a sidelong look his way, and John Fairbrother—Gentleman John—who tripped along with silken bows on the toes of his shoes. But one whom he looked for he did not see, and partly from fear that she might not come, and partly from dread lest she should pass him so closely by, he shambled into church with the rest before the bell had stopped.

He had not often been to church during the four years that he had lived on the island and the people made way for him as he pushed up into a dark corner under the gallery. There he sat and watched as before out of his slow eyes, never shifting their quiet gaze from the door of the porch. But the bell stopped, and Greeba had not come; and when Parson Gell hobbled up to the Communion-rail, still Greeba was not there. Then the service was begun, the door was closed, and Jason lay back and shut his eyes.

The prayers were said without Jason hearing them, but while the first lesson was being read, his wandering mind was suddenly ar-

rested. It was the story of Jacob and Esau; how Isaac, their father, seeing the day of his death at hand, sent Esau for venison, that he might eat and bless him before he died; how Jacob under the person of Esau obtained the blessing, and how Esau vowed to slay his brother Jacob.

"And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau.

"And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? Where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed.

"And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father.

. . . . . .

"And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;

"And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

"And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob."

As Parson Gell at the reading-desk mumbled these words through his toothless gums, it seemed to Jason as though he were awakening from a long sleep—a sleep of four years, a sleep full of dreams, both sweet and sad—and that everything was coming back upon him in a dizzy whirl. He remembered his mother, her cruel life, her death, and his own vow, and so vivid did these recollections grow in a moment that he trembled with excitement.

A woman in a black crape bonnet, who sat next to him in the pew, saw his emotions, and put a Bible into his hands. He accepted it with a slight movement of the head, but when he tried to find the place he turned dizzy and his hands shook. Seeing this the good woman, with a look of pity and a thought of her runaway son who was far off, took the Bible back, and after opening it at the chapter in Genesis, returned it in silence. Even then he did not read, but sat with wandering eyes, while nervous twitches crossed his face.

He was thinking that he had forgotten his great vow of vengeance, lulled to sleep by his vain dream of love; he was telling himself that his vow must yet be fulfilled or his mother who had urged

him to it, would follow him with her curse from her grave. For some minutes this feeling grew more and more powerful, and more and more his limbs and whole body quivered. The poor woman in the crape saw that he trembled, and leaned toward him and asked if he was ill. But he only shook his head and drew back in silence into the corner of the pew.

"I must be going mad," he thought, and to steady his mind he turned to the book, thinking to follow the old parson as he lisped along.

It was a reference Bible that the woman had lent him, and as his eyes rambled over the page, never resting until they lit on the words, *then will I slay my brother Jacob,* he shuddered and thought "How hideous!" All at once he marked the word *slay* in the margin with many references to it, and hardly knowing what he was doing he turned up the first of them. From that moment his senses were in a turmoil, and he knew nothing clearly of all that was being done about him. He thought he saw that through all ages God had made man the instrument of his vengeance on the wrongdoer. The stories of Moses, of Saul, of Samson, came back to him one by one, and as he read a chill terror filled his whole being.

He put the book down, trying to compose himself, and then he thought, "How childish! God is King of earth and heaven, and needs the help of no man." But his nervous fingers could not rest and he took up the Bible again, while the parson prosed through his short sermon. This time he turned away from the passages that haunted him, though "Esau, Esau, Esau," rang in his head. Rolling the leaves in his hand, he read in one place how the Lord visits His vengeance upon the children for the sins of the fathers, and then in another place how the nearest of kin to him that is killed shall avenge the blood spilt, and then again in yet another place how if man keeps not his covenant with the Lord, the Lord will send a faintness upon him, and a great and woful trembling, so that the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase him.

"Am I then afraid?" he asked himself, and shut the book once more. His head swam with vague thoughts. "I must keep my vow," he thought. "I am losing my senses," he thought again. "I am an Esau," he thought once more.

Then he looked around the church, and if he had seen Greeba at that moment the fire of his heart would have burnt itself out, and all thought of his vow would have gone from him as it had gone before. He did not see her, but he remembered her, and his soul dried away.

The service came to an end, and he strode off, turning from

every face; but John Fairbrother tripped after him on the road, touched him on the arm, looked up at him with a smirk, and said:

"Then you don't know where she is?"

"Who?" said Jason.

"Then you *don't* know, eh?" said John, with a meaning look.

"Who d'ye mean?—Greeba?"

"Just so. She's gone, though I warrant it's fetching coals to Newcastle to tell you so."

Hearing that, Jason pushed Gentleman John out of his way with a lunge that sent the dandy reeling, and bounded off toward Lague.

"Aw, well," muttered John, "you'd really think he *didn't* know."

The woman in crape who had followed Jason out of the church, thinking to speak to him, said: "Lave him alone. It's the spirit of the Lord that's strivin' with him."

And old Davy, who came up at the moment, said: "Divils, ma'am —divils in the head."

When Jason got to Lague he found the other Fairbrothers assembled there. Asher had missed Greeba the night before, and on rising late that morning—Sunday morning—he had so far conquered his laziness as to walk round to his brothers' houses and inquir for her. All six, except John, had then trudged back to Lague, thinking in their slow way to start a search, and they began their quest by ransacking Greeba's room. There they found two letters in a chest, clearly forgotten in a hasty leave-taking. One of them was Greeba's abandoned letter to Red Jason, the other was the letter of Michael Sunlocks to Greeba. The Fairbrothers read both with grim wonderment, and Jacob put Greeba's letter in his pocket. They were discussing the letter of Sunlocks as Jason entered; and they fell back at sight of his ashy face and the big beads of sweat that dropped from it.

"What's this? Where is she?" he said, and his powerful voice shook.

Without a word they handed him the letter, and he glanced it over and turned it in his hands, like one who does not see or can not read.

"Where's she gone?" he said again, lifting his helpless eyes to the faces about him.

"The devil knows," said Jacob; "but see—read—'Michael Sunlocks,'" running his finger along the signature.

At that a groan like the growl of a beast came from Jason's throat, and like a baited dog he looked around, not yet knowing on whom his wrath should fasten.

"It's very simple. It's plain to see that she has gone to him," said Jacob.

And then Jason's face was crossed by a ghastly smile.

"Oh, I'm a woman of a man," he muttered, looking stupidly down at the paper in his hand. "A poor-spirited fool," he muttered again. "I must be so, God knows." But at the next moment his white face grew blood-red, and he cried: "My curse upon him," and with that he tossed back the letter and swung out of the house.

He went on to Port-y-Vullin, mounted the new mill, threw down the roof rafters, and every wall that they had rested upon, until not one stone was left above another, and the house, so near completion, was only a heap of ruins. Then he went into the old hut, took up his treasures and flung them out to sea.

Meantime, the six Fairbrothers were putting their heads together.

"President!" said Thurstan; "that's as good as Governor-General."

"The deuce!" said John.

"She'll be rich, said Ross. "I always said she was fit for a lady."

"Hum! We've made a mess of it," said Stean.

"Well, you wouldn't take my advice," said Asher. "I was for treating the girl fair."

"Stay," said Jacob, "it's not yet too late."

"Well, what's to be done?" said the others together.

"Go after her," said Jacob.

"Ah!"

"Hum! Listen! This is what we had better do," said Jacob. "Sell Ballacraine and take her the money, and tell her we never meant to keep it from her."

"That's good," said John.

"A Governor-General has pickings, I can tell you," said Jacob.

"But who'll go?" said Asher.

"Go! Hum! What! The deuce! Well, I mightn't refuse to go myself," said Jacob.

"And maybe I wouldn't mind going with you," said John.

And so it was settled. But the other four said to themselves: "What about the pickings?" And then each, of himself, concluded secretly that if Jacob and John went to Iceland, Jacob and John would get all that was to be got by going, and that to prevent such cheating it would be necessary to go with them.

CHAPTER VII

THE YOKE OF JACOB

Jason paid the last of his debts in the Isle of Man, and then set sail for Iceland with less money in his pocket than Adam Fairbrother had carried there. He knew nothing of the whereabouts or condition of the man he was going to seek, except that Michael Sunlocks was at Reykjavik; for so much, and no more, he had read of the letter that the Fairbrothers put into his hands at Lague. The ship he first sailed by was a trader between Copenhagen and the greater ports of Scotland and Ireland, and at the Danish capital he secured a passage in a whaler bound for Reykjavik. His double voyage covered more than six weeks though there was a strong fair wind from the coast of Scotland to the coast of Denmark, and again from Denmark to Iceland. The delay fretted him, for his heart was afire; but there was no help for it, he had to submit. He did so with no cheer of spirit, or he might have learned something from the yarns of the seamen. All the gossip that came his way was a chance remark of the master, a Dane, who one day stopped in front of him as he lay by the hatches, and asked if he was an Icelander born. He answered that he was. Was he a seagoing man? Yes. Ship-broken, maybe, in some foreign country? That was so. How long had he been away from Iceland? Better than four years.

"You'll see many changes since that time," said the master, "Old Iceland is turned topsy-turvy."

Jason understood this to mean some political revolution, and turned a deaf ear to it, for such things seemed but sorry trifling to one with work like his before him.

They had then just sighted the Westmann Islands, through a white sea vapor, and an hour later they lay three miles off a rocky point, while an open boat came out to them over the rough water from the island called Home.

It was the post-boat of that desolate rock, fetching letters from the mainland, and ready to receive them from Denmark. The postman was little and old, and his name was Patricksen.

"Well, Patricksen, and what's the latest from the old country?"

sang out the master, after two newspapers had been thrown down and one letter taken up.

"Why, and haven't you heard it?" shouted the postman.

"What's that?" cried the master.

"They've put up the young Manxman," shouted the postman. "I knew his father," he added, and laughed mockingly, as he bent to the oars and started back with his newspapers over his three miles of tumbling sea.

Jason's mind threw off its torpor at the sound of those words. While the boat lay alongside he leaned over the gunwale and listened eagerly. When it sheered off he watched it until it had faded into a fog. Then he turned to the master and was about to ask a question, but quickly recovered himself and was silent. "Better not," he thought. "It would be remembered when all should be over."

Late the same day they came for the first time in full view of the southeast coast of Iceland. The fog had lifted before a strong breeze from the west, where the red sun was dipping into the sea. They were then by the needles of Portland, side on to the vast arch which the heavy blow of the tides of ten thousand years has beaten out of the rock. At the sea's edge were a hundred jagged prongs of burnt crag, flecked with the white wings and echoing with the wild cry of countless sea birds; behind that was a plain of lava dust for sea-beach; farther back the dome of a volcano, lying asleep under its coverlet of snow; still farther a gray glacier, glistening with silver spikes; and beyond all a black jokull, Wilderness-jokull, torn by many earthquakes, seamed and streaked with the unmelted ice of centuries and towering over a stony sea of desert, untrodden yet by the foot of man.

Desolate as the scene was, Jason melted at the sight of it; for this island, born of fire and frost, stood to him as the only place in God's wide world that he could call his home, and little as it had done for him, less than nothing as he owed to it, yet it was his native land, and in coming back to its bleak and terrible shores he looked upon it with a thrill of the heart and saw it through his tears.

But he had little time and less desire to give way to tender feelings, and very soon he had small need to steel himself to the work before him, for everything served to spur him on to it. This was Iceland. This was the new home of Michael Sunlocks. This was where his mother had starved.

This was where *she* had fled to, who had wronged him sorely.

Early the next day they rounded the Smoky Point, leaving the

Old Man crag under its shocks of foam to the right, and the rock called the Mealsack, under its white cloud of sea gulls, to the left, and began to beat down the fiord toward Reykjavik. It was not yet six o'clock—the Icelandic mid-evening—when they cast anchor inside the little island of Engy; but the year was far worn toward winter, and the night of the northern land had closed down.

And the time having come to leave the whaler, Jason remembered that he had been but a moody companion for his shipmates, though they had passed some perilous days and nights together. So he bade them good-by with what cheer he could summon up at last, and the rough fellows kissed him after the manner of their people, showing no rancor at all, but only pity, and saying among themselves that it was plain to see he had known trouble and, though given to strange outbursts when alone, was as simple and as gentle as a child, and would never hurt a fly.

He had hailed a passing boat to run him ashore, and it was one of the light skiffs with the double prow that the boys of Iceland use when they hunt among the rocks for the eggs and down of the eider duck. Such, indeed, though so late in the season, had that day been the work of the two lads whose boat he had chanced upon, and having dropped down to their side from the whaler with his few belongings—his long coat of Manx homespun over his arm, his seaman's boots across his shoulders, his English fowling-piece in his hand and his pistol in his belt—he began to talk with them of their calling as one who knew it.

"Where have you been working, my lads?" said Jason.

"Out on Engy," said the elder of the boys.

"Found much?"

"Not to-day."

"Who cleans it?"

"Mother."

And at that a frown passed over Jason's face in the darkness. The boys were thinly clad, both were barelegged and barefooted. Plainly they were brothers, one of them being less than twelve years of age, and the other as young as nine.

"What's your father?"

"Father's dead," said the lad.

"Where do you live with your mother?"

"Down on the shore yonder, below the silversmith's."

"The little house behind the Missions, in front of the vats?"

"Yes, sir, do you know it?"

"I was born in it, my lad," said Jason sadly, and he thought to himself, "Then the old mother is dead."

But he also thought of his own mother, and her long years of worse than widowhood. "All that has yet to be paid for," he told himself with a cold shudder, and then he remembered that he had just revealed himself.

"See, my lads," he said, "here is a crown for you, and say nothing of who gave it you."

The little Icelandic capital twinkled low at the water's edge, and as they came near to it Jason saw that there was a flare of torchlights and open fires, with dark figures moving busily before the glow where he looked for the merchant stores that had faced the sea.

"What's this?" he asked.

"The fort that the new Governor is throwing up," said the boy.

Then through a number of smacks, some schooners, a brig, a coal hulk and many small boats, they ran in at the little wooden jetty that forked out over a reef of low rocks. And there some idlers who sat on casks under the lamp, with their hands in their pockets and their skin caps squashed down on their foreheads, seemed to recognize Jason as he landed.

"Lord bless me," said one, with a look of terror, "it's the dead come to life again."

"God-a-mercy me," said another, pausing with his snuff at his nose, "I could have sworn I fetched him a dead man out of the sea."

Jason knew them, but before they had so far regained their self-command as to hail to him, he had faced about, though eager to ask many questions, and walked away. "Better not," he thought, and hurried on.

He took the High Street toward the Inn, and then an irregular alley that led past the lake to a square in front of the Cathedral, and ended at a little house of basaltic blocks that nestled at its feet, for it was there he meant to lodge. It had been the home of a worthy couple whom he had known in the old days, caretakers of the Cathedral, and his mother's only friends in her last days. Old and feeble and very deaf they had both been then, and as he strode along in the darkness he wondered if he should find them still alive. He found them as he had left them: not otherwise changed than if the five years of his absence had been but five hours. The old man was still at the hearth chopping up some logs of driftwood, and the old woman was still at the table ironing her linen by the light of a rush candle. With uplifted hands and cries of wonderment they received him, and while he supped on the porridge and skyr that they set before him they talked and questioned.

"And where have you been this many a day?" said the old man.

"In England, Scotland, Denmark—many places," said Jason.

"Well, they've buried you these four years and better," said the old man, with a grimace.

"Lord bless me, yes, love; and a cross over your grave too, and your name on it," said the old woman, with a look of awe.

"Who did that?" said Jason.

"Jorgen Jorgensen," said the old man, grinning.

"It's next to your mother's, love. He did that, too, for when he heard that she was gone he repented," said the old woman.

"It's no good folks repenting when their bad work's done and done with," said the old man.

"That's what I say. There's them above that won't call it repenting. And see what has come of it," said the old woman.

"What?" said Jason.

"Why, he has gone. Didn't you know, love?" said the old woman.

"How gone?" said Jason. "Dead?"

"Worse—disgraced—driven out of Iceland," said the old man.

Then an ugly smile crossed Jason's face. "It is the beginning," he thought.

"But the old mother is dead, is she not?" he said aloud.

"Your father's mother? Old Mother Orryson?" said the old woman.

"No such luck," the old man muttered. "Comes to service every morning, the old sinner."

"But there's another family living in her house," said Jason.

"Oh, that's because she's past her work, and the new Governor keeps her," said the old man. "No news of your father, though," he added, with a shrug, and then there was a silence for some minutes.

"Poor Rachel," said the old woman, presently. "Now *there* was a good creature. And bless me, how she was wrapped up in her boy! I was just like that when I had my poor little Olaf. I never had but one child neither. Well, my lad," she said, dropping her flat-iron and raising her apron, "you can say you had a good mother anyhow."

Jason finished his supper and went out into the town. All thoughts, save one thought, had been banished from his mind. Where was this Michael Sunlocks? What was he? How was he to be met with? "Better not ask," thought Jason. "Wait and watch." And so he walked on. Dark as was the night, he knew every step of the way. The streets looked smaller and meaner than he remembered them, and yet they showed an unwonted animation.

Oil lamps hung over many stalls, the stores were still open and people passed to and fro in little busy throngs. Recalling that heavy quiet of that hour of night five years ago, Jason said to himself, "The town has awakened from a long sleep."

To avoid the glances of prying eyes, he turned down toward the bridge, passing the Deanery and the Bishop's Palace. There the streets were all but as quiet as of old, the windows showed few lights, and the monotonous chime of the sea came up through the silence from the iron-bound shore. Yet, even there, from two houses, there were sounds of work. These were the Latin school and the jail. In the school a company of students was being drilled by a sergeant, whose words of command rang out in the intervals of shuffling feet.

"What does this mean?" said Jason to a group of young girls, who, with shawls over their heads, were giggling together in the darkness by the gate.

"It's the regiment started by the new Governor," said one of the girls.

"The new Governor again," thought Jason, and turned away. From the jail there came a noise as of carpenters hammering.

"What are they doing there?" said Jason to a little tailor, who passed him on the street at that moment with his black bag on his back.

"Turning the jail into a house for the new Governor," said the tailor.

"Again the new Governor," said Jason, and he strode on by the tailor's side. "A stirring fellow, whoever he may be."

"That's true, young as he is," said the tailor.

"Is he then so young?" said Jason, carelessly.

"Four or five and twenty, hardly more," said the tailor, "but with a headpiece fit for fifty. He has driven those Danish thieves out of the old country, with all their trick and truck. Why, you couldn't call your bread your own—no, nor your soul neither. Oh, a Daniel, sir—a young Daniel. He's to be married soon. She's staying with the old Bishop now. They say she's a foreigner."

"Who?" said Jason.

"Why, his wife that is to be," said the tailor. "Good-night, sir," he cried, and turned down an alley.

Then Jason remembered Greeba, and the hot blood tingled in his cheeks. Never yet for an instant had it come to him to think that Michael Sunlocks and the new Governor were the same man, and that Greeba and his bride were one. But telling himself that she might even then be in that little town, with nothing but the

darkness hiding him from her sight, he shuddered at the near chance of being discovered by her, and passed on by the river toward the sea. Yet, being alone there, with only the wash of the waves for company, he felt his great resolve begin to pall, as a hundred questions rose to torment him. Suppose she were here, and they were to meet, dare he after all do *that?* Though she loved this man, could he still do *that?* Oh, was it not horrible to think of—that he should cross the seas for *that?*

So, to put an end to the torture of such questionings, and escape from himself, he turned back from the shore to where the crowds looked thickest in the town. He went as he came, by the bank of the river, and when he was crossing the bridge some one shot past him on a horse It was a man, and he drew up sharply at the Bishop's Palace, threw his reins over the pier of the gate, and bounded into the house with the light foot that goes with a light heart. "The new Governor," thought Jason, though he had seen him only as a shadow. "Who is he, I wonder?" he thought again, and with a sigh for his own condition within sight of this man's happiness he pushed heavily along.

Hardly had he got back into the town when he was seen and recognized, for with a whoop and a spring and a jovial oath a tipsy companion of former days came sweeping down upon him from the open door of a drinking-shop.

"What? Jason? Bless my soul! Come in," the fellow cried, embracing him; and to avoid the curious gaze of the throng that had gathered on the pavement Jason allowed himself to be led into the house.

"Well, God save us! So you're back! But I heard you had come. Old Jon Olafsson told us. He was down at the jetty. Boys," the fellow shouted to a little company of men who sat drinking in the hot parlor, "he's another Lazarus, come back from the dead."

"Here's to his goot healt, den," said a fat Dutch captain, who sat on the hearth, strumming a fiddle to tune it.

And while the others laughed and drank, a little deformed dwarf in a corner with an accordion between his twisted fingers began to play and sing.

"This is the last thing that should have happened," thought Jason, and with many excuses he tried to elbow his way out. But the tipsy comrade held him while he rattled on:

"Been away—foreign, eh? Married since? No? Then the girls of old Iceland are best, eh? What? Yes? And old Iceland's the fairest land the sun shines upon, eh? No? But, Lord bless

me, what a mess you made of it by going away just when you did!"

At that Jason, while pushing his way through, turned about with a look of inquiry.

"Didn't know it? What? That after the mother died old Jorgen went about looking for you? No? Wanted? Why, to make a man of you, boy. Make you his son and the like of that, and not too soon either. And when he couldn't find you he took up with this Michael Sunlocks."

"Michael Sunlocks?" Jason repeated, in a distant sort of voice.

"Just so; this precious new Governor that wants to put down all the drinking."

"The new Governor?"

"Yes. Put *your* nose out, boy; for that was the start of his luck."

Jason felt dizzy, and under the hard tan of his skin his face grew white.

"You should know him, though. No? Well, after old Jorgen had quarreled with him, everybody said he was a kind of bastard brother of yours."

The reeking place had got hotter. It was now stifling, and Jason stumbled out into the street.

Michael Sunlocks was the new Governor, and Michael Sunlocks was about to be married to Greeba. Thrice had this man robbed him of his blessing, standing in the place that ought to have been his; once with his father, once with Greeba, and once again with Jorgen Jorgensen.

He tried to reckon it all up, but do what he would he could not keep his mind from wandering. The truth had fallen upon him at a blow, and under his strong emotions his faculties seemed to be slain in a moment. He felt blind, and deaf, and unable to think. Presently, without knowing where he was going, but impelled by some blind force, and staggering along like a drunken man, he found himself approaching the Bishop's Palace.

"He is there," he thought: "the man who has stood in my place all his days: the man who has stripped me of every good thing in life. He is there, in honor, and wealth, and happiness; and I am here, a homeless outcast in the night. Oh, that I could do it now—now—now—!"

But at that he remembered that he had never yet seen Michael Sunlocks, to know him from another man. "I must wait," he thought. "I must go to work cautiously. I must see him first, and watch him."

The night was then far spent toward midnight; the streets had grown quiet, the lights of the town no longer sent a yellow glare over the grass-clad housetops, and from a quiet sky the moon and stars shone out.

Jason was turning back toward his lodgings when he heard a voice that made him stand. It was a woman's voice singing, and it came with the undertones of some string instrument from the house in front of him. After a moment he pushed the gate open and walked across the little grass plot until he came beneath the only window from which a light still shone. There he stopped and listened, laying his hand on the sill to steady himself.

Ah! now he knew the voice too well. It was Greeba's. She was there; she was on the other side of that wall at that instant. And she was singing. It was a love-song that she sang. Her very heart seemed to speak in it, for her tones were the tones of love, and *he* must be beside her.

"It is for him she has left me," thought Jason, in the whirl of his dazed brain; "for him and his place, his station, and the pride of his success."

Then, remembering how his love of this woman had fooled him through five treacherous years, turning him aside from thoughts of his vow, giving him his father's money for his mother's wrongs, and how she who had been so dear to him had drawn him on in the days of her trouble, and cast him off when another beckoned to her, he cried in his tortured heart: "Oh, God in heaven, give me this man into my hands."

CHAPTER VIII

THE SWORD OF ESAU

Jason went back to his lodging by the Cathedral, found the old caretaker sitting up for him, made some excuse for returning late, and turned in to bed. His room was the guest-chamber—a little, muggy, stifling box, with bed and bedding of eider down sewed into canvas sacks. He threw off his boots and lay down in his clothes. Hour followed hour and he did not sleep. He was nevertheless not wholly awake; but retained a sort of sluggish consciousness which his dazed brain could not govern. Twelve had chimed from the great clock of the turret overhead as he lay down, and he heard one, two, three, and four follow in their turn. By this

time he was feeling a dull pain at the back of his head, and a heavy throbbing in his neck. Until then he had been ever a man of great bodily strength, with never an ache or ailment. "I am making myself ill before anything is done," he thought, "and if I fall sick nothing can come of my enterprise. That must not be." With an effort of will he composed himself to sleep. Still for a space he saw the weary night wear on; but the lapse, the broken thread, and the dazed sense stole over him at last, and he dropped into a deep slumber. When he awoke the white light of midday was coming in strong dancing bars through the rents of the dark blanket that covered the little window, the clock of the Cathedral was chiming twelve once again, and over the little cobble causeway of the street in front there was the light patter of many sealskin shoes. "How could I sleep away my time like this with so much to do?" he thought, and leaped up instantly.

His old landlady had more than once looked in upon him during the morning, and watched him with an air of pity. "Poor lad, he looks ill," she thought; and so left him to sleep on. While he ate his breakfast, of skyr and skate and coffee, the good soul busied herself about him, asking what work he had a mind to do now that he had come back, and where he meant to look for it, with other questions of a like kind. But he answered her many words with few of his own, merely saying that he intended to look about him before deciding on anything, and that he had something in his pocket to go on with in the meanwhile.

Some inquiries he made of her in his turn, and they were mainly about the new President, or Governor; what like he was to look upon, and what his movements were, and if he was much seen in the town. The good body could tell him very little, being old, very deaf, and feeble on her feet, and going about hardly at all farther than the floors of the Cathedral on cleaning days. But her deaf old husband, hobbling in from the street at that moment, said he had heard somebody say that a session of the Althing was sitting then, and that under the Republic that had lately been proclaimed Michael Sunlocks presided at the parliament-house daily about midday.

Hearing this, Jason rose from his unfinished breakfast, and went out on some pretended errand; but when he got to the wooden shed where the Althing held its session he found the sitting over and the delegates dispersed. His only object had been to see Michael Sunlocks that he might know him, and having lost his first opportunity he returned the following day, coming earlier, before the sitting had begun or the delegates had yet gathered. But

though he lounged within the door-yard, while the members passed through, jesting and laughing together, he saw no one young enough to answer to Michael Sunlocks. He was too much in dread of attracting attention to inquire of the few idlers who looked on like himself, so he went away and came yet again the next day after and waited as before. Once more he felt that the man he looked for had not passed in with the rest, and, between fear of exciting suspicion and of throwing away further chances, he questioned the doorkeeper of the Chamber. This person stuttered before every word, but Jason learned at length that Michael Sunlocks had not been there for a week, that by the rule of the new Constitution the Governor presided only at the sittings of the higher house, the Council, and that the present sittings were those of the lower house, the Senate.

That was Thursday, and Jason reflected that though four days were gone nothing was done. Vexed with himself for the caution that had wasted so much time, he boldly started inquiries on many sides. Then he learned that it was the daily practice of the Governor to go at twelve o'clock noon to the embankment in front of the merchant stores, where his gangs of masons were throwing up the new fort. At that hour that day Jason was there, but found that the Governor had already been and gone. Going earlier the next day, Friday, he learned that the Governor had not yet come, and so he lay about to wait for him. But the men whom he had questioned began to cast curious glances in his direction, and to mutter together in groups. Then he remembered that it was a time of revolution, that he might be mistaken for a Danish spy, and as such be forthwith seized and imprisoned. "That would stop everything," he thought, and moved away.

In a tavern of a by-street, a long lean youth, threadbare and tipsy, formerly a student and latterly expelled from the college for drunkenness, told him that the new Governor turned in at the Latin school every evening at dusk, to inspect the drill of the regiment he had enrolled. So to the Latin school at dusk Jason made his way, but the place was dark and silent when he came upon it, and from a lad who was running out at the moment he heard that the drill-sergeant had fallen ill, and the drill been discontinued.

On the wharf by the jetty the boatman who had recognized him on landing, old Jon Olafsson, told him that serving whiting and skate to the Bishop's Palace he found that the new Governor was ever coming and going there. Now of all houses Jason had most avoided that house, lest he should be seen of those eyes that would surely read his mission at a glance. Yet as night fell in, and he

might approach the place with safety, he haunted the ways that led to it. But never again did he see Michael Sunlocks even in the uncertain darkness, and thinking how hard it was to set eyes on this man, whom he must know of a surety before ever his enterprise could be ripe, a secret dread took hold of him, and he all but renounced his design. "Why is it that I can not see him?" he thought. "Why, of all men in the town, is he the only one whom I can never meet face to face? Why, of all men here, am I the only one whom he has never seen?" It was as if higher powers were keeping them apart.

By this time he realized that he was being observed, for in the dusk, on the Thingvellir road, that led past Government House, three men overtook him, and went on to talk with easy confidence in signs and broken words. He saw that they were Danes; that one was old and white-headed; another was young, sallow, and of a bitter spirit; and the third, who was elderly, was of a meek and quiet manner.

"How are they going on in the old country? Anything done yet? When are they coming?" said the young man.

"Ah, don't be afraid," said the old man. "We know you are watching him," he added, with a side-long motion of the head toward Government House. "But he will send no more of our sons and brothers to the sulphur mines, to slave like beasts of burden. His days are numbered."

Then the young man laughed bitterly.

"They say he is to be married. Let him make merry while he may," he said with a deep oath.

And at that Jason faced about to them.

"You have been mistaken, sirs," he said. "I am not a spy, and neither am I an assassin."

He walked away with what composure he could command, but he trembled like a leaf, for by this encounter three new thoughts possessed him; first, that when his attempt had been made and his work done, he, who believed himself appointed by God as the instrument of His righteous retribution, would stand no otherwise before man than as a common midnight murderer; next, that unless he made haste with his design he would be forestalled by others with baser motives; and, again, that if his bearing had so nearly revealed his purpose to the Danes it might suggest it to others with more interest in defeating it.

In his former rashness he had gone everywhere, even where the throngs were thickest, and talked with every one, even the six stalwart constables who had taken the place of the rheumatic watch-

man whom he knew in earlier days But from the hour of that meeting with the Danes he found himself going about as stealthily as a cat, watching everybody, thinking everybody was watching him, shrinking from every sight, and quaking at every sound. "They can do what they like with me after it is over," he thought, "but first let it be done."

He felt afraid, who had never before known the taste of fear; he felt weary, who had never until then known what it was to be tired. "Oh, what is this that is coming over me?" he thought. "If I am doing well, why do I tremble?" For even while he planned his daring attempt a great feebleness seemed to be in all his members.

Thus it chanced that on the next day thereafter, Saturday, he saw many busy preparations along the line of the High Street and its byways, such as the swinging of pulley ropes from house front to house front and the shaking out of bunting, without asking what festival they purported. But returning to his lodging in the evening he found his landlady busy with preparations of a like kind about the entrance to the yard of the Cathedral, and then he knew too well what new thing was coming. All the same he asked, and his landlady answered him:

"Lord bless me," she cried, "and haven't you heard that the young Governor is to be wedded?"

"When?" said Jason.

"To-morrow," said the old lady.

"Where?"

"Why, in the Cathedral, surely. It will be a bonny sight, I promise you. You would like to see it, I make no doubt. Well, and so you shall, my son. I'll get you in. Only leave it to me. Only leave it to me."

Jason had expected this answer; like a horse that quivers under the lash, while it is yet hissing over his head, he had seen the blow coming, yet when it came it startled and stunned him. He got up, touching no food, and staggered back into the street.

It was now dark night. The stores were lit up by their open lamps, whose noisome smoke streamed out over the pathway, and mingled with the foul vapors that came from the drinking shops. The little town was very busy; throngs of people passed to and fro, and there was much shouting and noisy laughter.

To Jason all this was a mass of confusion, like a dream that is vague and broken and has no semblance of reality. His knees smote together as he walked, and his mind was clogged and numbed. At length he was conscious that some brawlers who

were lounging at the door of a tavern were jeering as he went by them, and that a woman who was passing at the same moment was rating them roundly.

"Can't you see he's ill?" she was saying, and they were laughing lustily.

He turned toward the sea, and there, with only the black beach before his eyes and the monotonous beat of the waves in his ears, his faculties grew clearer. "Oh God!" he thought, "am I to strike him down before her face and at the very foot of the altar? It is terrible. It must be true that I am ill—or perhaps mad—or both."

But he wrestled with his irresolute spirit and overcame it. One by one he marshaled his reasons and bit by bit he justified himself. When his anger wavered against the man who had twice supplanted him, he recalled his vow to execute judgment, and when his vow seemed horrible he remembered that Greeba herself had wronged him.

Thus he had juggled with himself night after night, and if morning after morning peace had come with the coming of light, it was gone forever now. He rehearsed everything in his mind and saw it all as he meant it to be. To-morrow while the bells were ringing he would go into the Cathedral. His old landlady, the caretaker, would put him in the front seat before the altar-rail. The pews would already be thronged, and there would be whispering behind him, and little light fits of suppressed laughter. Presently the old Bishop would come, halting along in his surplice, holding the big book in his trembling hands. Then the bridegroom would step forward, and he should see him and mark him and know him. The bride herself would come next in a dazzling cloud of her bridesmaids, all dressed in white. Then as the two stood together—he and she, hand in hand, glancing softly at each other, and with all other eyes upon them, he himself would rise up—*and do it.* Suddenly there would be a wild cry, and she would turn toward him, and see him, and understand him, and fall fainting before him. Then while both lay at his feet he would turn to those about him and say, very calmly, "Take me. It was I." All being done, he would not shrink, and when his time came he would meet his fate without flinching, and in the awful hereafter he would stand before the white throne and say: "It would have been an evil thing if God's ways had not been justified before men: so I have executed on earth His judgment who has said in His Holy Writ that the wrongdoer shall surely suffer vengeance, even to the third and fourth generation of His children."

Thinking so, in the mad tangle of his poor, disordered brain,

yet with a great awe upon him as of one laden with a mission from on high, Jason went back to his lodging, threw himself down, without undressing, upon the bed, and fell into a heavy sleep.

When he awoke next morning the bells in the turret overhead were jangling in his ears, and his deaf old landlady was leaning over him and calling him:

"Get up, love, get up: it's late, love; you'll miss it all, love; it's time to go in, love," she was saying; and a little later she led him by a side door into the Cathedral.

He took a seat where he had decided to take it, in a corner of the pew before the altar-rail, and all seemed the same as he had pictured. The throngs of people were behind him, and he could hear their whispering and light laughter while they waited. There was the door at which the venerable Bishop would soon enter, carrying his big book, and there was the path, kept free and strewn with flowers, down which the bride and her train would pass on to the red form before him. Ah! the flowers—blood red and purple—how sweetly they trailed over altar-rail, and pulpit, and the tablet of the ten commandments! Following them with his eyes, while with his hands he fumbled his belt for *that* which he had concluded to carry there, suddenly he was smitten with an awful dread. One line of the printed words before him seemed to come floating through the air down to his face in a vapor of the same blood-red.

Thou shalt do no murder!

Jason started to his feet. Why was he there? What had he come to do? He must go. The place was stifling him. In another moment he was crushing his way out of the Cathedral. He felt like a man sentenced to death.

Being in the free air again he regained his self-control. "What madness! It is no murder," he thought. But he could not get back to his seat, and so he turned to where the crowd was thickest outside. That was down the line of the pathway to the wide west entrance. As he approached this point he saw that the people were in high commotion. He hurried up to them and inquired the cause. The bridal party had just passed through. At that moment the full swell of the organ came out through the open doors. The marriage service had begun.

After a while Jason had so far recovered his composure as to look about him. Deep as the year had sunk toward winter, the day was brilliant. The air was so bright that it seemed to ring. The sea in front of the town smiled under the sunlight; the broad stretch of lava behind it glistened, the glaciers in the distance

sparkled, and the black jokulls far beyond showed their snowy domes against the blue sky. Oh, it was one of God's own mornings, when all His earth looks glad. And the Cathedral yard—for all it slept so full of dead men's bones—was that day a bright and busy place. Troops of happy girls were there in their jackets of gray, braided with gold or silver, and with belts of filigree; troops of young men, too, in their knee breeches, with bows of red ribbon, their dark-gray stockings and sealskin shoes; old men as well in their coats of homespun; and old women in their long blue cloaks; children in their plaited kirtles, and here and there a traveler with his leather wallet for his snuff and money. At the entrance gate there was a triumphal arch of ribbons and evergreens, and under its shadow there were six men with horns and guns, ready for a salute when the bride appeared; and in the street outside there was a stall laden with food and drink for all who should that day come and ask.

Only to Jason was the happy place a Gethsemane, and standing in the thick of the crowd, on a grave with a sunken roof, under the shadow of the Cathedral, he listened with a dull ear to the buzz of talk between two old gossips behind him. He noticed that they were women with prominent eyeballs, which produced a dreamy, serious, half-stupid, half-humorous look, like that of the dogs in the picture that sit in the judgment-seat.

"She's English," said one. "No, Irish. No, Manx—whatever that means. Any way, she's foreign, and can't speak a word that any body can understand. So Mother Helda says, and she's a worthy woman, you know, and cleans the floors at the Palace."

"But they say she's a sweet lady for all that," said the other; and just then a young student at their back pushed his laughing face between their shoulders and said:

"Who? Old Mother Helda?"

"Mother Helda be bothered. The lady. And her father has been wrecked in coming to her wedding, too! Poor old man, what a pity! The Governor sent my son Oscar with twenty of Loega's men to Stappen to look for him. That was a fortnight ago. I expect him back soon."

"They might have waited until he came. Why didn't they?"

"Oscar?" said the laughing face between them.

"The father, goose. Poor lady, how lonely she must feel! But then the old Bishop is so good to everybody."

"Well, he deserves a good wife."

"The Old Bishop?" said the student, shaking his sides.

"The young Governor, I'm talking of; and don't be so quick in snapping folks up, Jon Arnason. He's the best Governor we ever had. And what a change from the last one. Why, he doesn't mind speaking to any one. Just think, only yesterday he stopped me and said, 'Good-morning'; he said, 'your son won't be long away now,' quite humble and homelike."

"Well, God bless him—and her too, foreign or not—and may they live long—"

"And have a good dozen," added the laughing voice behind them.

And then all three laughed together.

By this time the organ which had been silent for a little while, had burst afresh, and though its strains were loud and jubilant, yet to Jason they seemed to tell the story of his sorrow and all the troubles of his days. He tried not to listen, and to pass the moments in idly watching the swaying throng, whose heads beneath his own rose and fell like a broken sea. But his mind *would* be active, and the broad swell of the music floated into his soul and consumed it. "Can it be possible," he thought, "that I intend to smite him down when he comes through that doorway by her side? And yet I love her—and he is my brother."

Still the organ rang out over graveyard and people, and only by an effort of will could Jason hold back his tears. "Man! man!" he cried in his heart, "call it by its true name—not judgment, but murder. Yes, murder for jealous love, murder for love despised!"

A new and awful light had then illumined his gloomy mind, and his face betokened his sufferings, for, though no tears fell down his hard cheeks, his eyes were bloodshot. In complete self-forgetfulness he pressed forward, until his way was stopped by a little iron cross that stood at the head of a grave. "My mother's," he thought. "No, hers is next."

The organ broke into yet another strain at that moment—a proud, triumphant peal of song, which in the frenzy of Jason's mind seemed either to reach up to heaven's gate or to go down to the brink of hell. There was a movement among the people, a buzz of voices, a hush, and a whispered cry, "They are coming, they are coming!"

"God bless them," said one.

"Heaven protect them," said another.

And every blessing fell on Jason like a curse. "Murder let it be," he thought, and turned his eyes where other eyes were looking. Then passing under the broad arch, stepping out of the blue shadow into the white sunshine, all radiant in her grace and

lovely sweetness, meek and tender, with tears in her soft brown eyes—it was she, it was she; it was Greeba—Greeba—Greeba.

Jason felt his strength exhausted. A strange dizziness seized him. He looked down to avoid the light. His eyes fell on the iron cross before him, and he read the name graven upon it. *The name was his own.*

Then everything seemed to whirl around him. He remembered no more, save a shuffling of feet, a dull hum over his head, like the noise of water in the ears of a drowning man, and a sense of being lifted and carried.

But another consciousness came to him, and it was very sweet, though uncertain. He was floating up—up—up to where the mountains were green, and the sea was tranquil, and the trees made music in the quiet air. And Greeba was there; she was laying her cool hand on his hot forehead, and he was looking at the troubled heaving of her round bosom. "Aren't you very proud of yourself, Jason?" she was whispering softly, and then he was clasping the beautiful girl in his arms and kissing her, and she was springing away, blushing deeply, and he was holding down his head, and laughing in his heart.

"Lie still, love; lie you still," fell on his ear, and he opened his eyes. He was in his own room at the little cottage of the caretaker. The old woman was bending over him, and bathing his forehead with one hand, while with the other hand she was holding her apron to her eyes.

"He's coming round nicely, praise the Lord," she said, cheerily.

"I remember," said Jason, in a weak voice. "Did I faint?"

"Faint, love?" said the good soul, putting her deaf ear close to his lips. "Why, it's fever, love; brain fever."

"What time is it?" said Jason.

"Time, love? Lord help us, what does the boy want with the time? But it's just the way with all of them. Mid-evening, love."

"What day is it—Sunday?"

"Sunday, love? No, but Tuesday. It was on Sunday you fell senseless, poor boy."

"Where was that?"

"Where? Why, where but in the Cathedral yard, just at the very minute the weddiners were coming out at the door."

And hearing this Jason's face broke into a smile like sunshine, and he uttered a loud cry of relief: "Thank God. Oh, thank God."

But while an angel of hope seemed to bring him good tidings of a great peril averted, and even as a prayer gushed from his torn

heart, he remembered the vision of his delirium, and knew that he was forever a bereaved and broken man. At that his face, which had been red as his hair, grew pale as ashes, and a low cunning came over him, and he wondered if he had betrayed himself in his unconsciousness.

"Have I been delirious?" he asked.

"Delirious, love? Oh, no, love; no; only distraught a little and cursing sometimes, the saints preserve us," said the old landlady in her shrill treble.

Jason remembered that the old woman was deaf, and gathering that she alone had nursed him, and that no one else had seen him since his attack, except her deaf husband and a druggist from the High Street who had bled him, he smiled and was satisfied.

"Lord bless me, how he mends," said the hearty old woman, and she gave him the look of an affectionate dog.

"And now, good soul, I am hungry and must make up for all this fasting," said Jason.

"Ay, ay, and that you must, lad," said the old woman, and off she went to cook him something to eat.

But his talk of hunger had been no more than a device to get rid of her, for he knew that the kind creature would try to restrain him from rising. So when she was gone he stumbled to his feet, feeling very weak and dazed, and with infinite struggle and sweat tugged on his clothes—for they had been taken off—and staggered out into the streets.

It was night, and the clouds hung low as if snow might be coming, but the town seemed very light, as with bonfires round about it and rockets shot into the air, and very noisy, too, as with guns fired and music played, so that Jason's watery eyes felt dazzled, and his singing ears were stunned. But he walked on, hardly knowing which way he was going, and hearing only as sounds at sea the voices that called to him from the doors of the drinking-shops, until he came out at the bridge to the Thingvellir road. And there, in the sombre darkness, he was overtaken by the three Danes who had spoken to him before.

"So your courage failed you at the last moment—I watched you and saw how it was. Ah, don't be afraid, we are your friends, and you are one of us. Let us play at hide-and-seek no longer."

"They say he is going down the fiord in search of his wife's father. Take care he does not slip away. Old Jorgen is coming back. Good-night."

So saying, without once turning their faces, toward Jason's face, they strode past him with an indifferent air. Then Jason

became conscious that Government House was ablaze with lights, that some of its windows were half down, that sounds of music and dancing came from within, and that on the grass plot in front which was lit by torches men and women in gay costumes were strolling to and fro, in pairs.

And turning from the bridge toward the house he saw a man go by on horseback in the direction of the sea, and remembered in a dull way that just there and at that hour he had seen Michael Sunlocks ride past him in the dusk.

What happened thereafter he never rightly knew, only that in a distempered dream he was standing with others outside the rails about Government House while the snow began to fall through the darkness, that he saw the dancers circling across the lighted windows and heard the music of the flutes and violins above the steady chime of the sea, that he knew this merry-making to be a festival of her marriage whom he loved with a love beyond that of his immortal soul, that the shame of his condition pained him, and the pain of it maddened him, the madness of it swept away his consciousness, and that when he came to himself he had forced his way into the house, thinking to meet his enemy face to face, and was in a room alone with Greeba, who was cowering before him with a white face of dismay.

"Jason," she was saying, "why are you here?"

"Why are *you* here?" he asked.

"Why have you followed me?" she cried.

"Why have you followed *him?*"

"What have you come for?"

"Is *this* what *you* have come for?"

"Jason," she cried again, "I wronged you, that is true; but you forgave me. I asked you to choose for me, and if you had said 'stay,' I should have stayed. But you released me, you know you did. You gave me up to him and now he is my husband."

"But this man is Michael Sunlocks," said Jason.

"Didn't you know that before?" said Greeba. Ah, then, I know what you have come for. You have recalled your forgiveness, and have come to punish me for deserting you. But spare me! Oh, spare me! Not for my own sake, but his; for I am his wife now and he loves me very dearly. No, no, not that, but only spare me, Jason," she cried, and crouched at his feet.

"I would not harm a hair of your head, Greeba," he said.

"Then what have you come for?" she said.

"This man is a son of Stephen Orry," he said.

"Then it is for him," she cried, and leaped to her feet. "Ah,

now I understand. I have not forgotten the night in Port-y-Vullin."

"Does *he* know of that?" said Jason.

"No."

"Does he know I am here?"

"No."

"Does he know we have met?"

"No."

"Let me see him!"

"Why do you ask to see him?"

"Let me see him!"

"But why," she stammered. "Why see him? It is I who have wronged you."

"That's why I want to see him," said Jason.

She uttered a cry of terror and staggered back. There was an ominous silence, in which it passed through Greeba's mind that all that was happening then had happened before. She could hear Jason's labored breathing and the dull thud of the music through the walls.

"Jason," she cried, "What harm has he ever done you? I alone am guilty before you. If your vengeance must fall on any one let it fall on me."

"Where is he?" said Jason.

"He is gone," said Greeba.

"Gone?"

"Yes, to find my poor father. The dear old man was wrecked in coming here, and my husband sent men to find them, but they blundered and came back empty-handed, and not a half an hour ago he went off himself."

"Was he riding?" said Jason; but without waiting for an answer he made toward the door.

"Wait! Where are you going?" cried Greeba.

Swift as lightning the thought had flashed through her mind, "What if he should follow him!"

Now the door to the room was a heavy, double-hung door of antique build, and at the next instant she had leaped to it and shot the heavy wooden bar that bolted it.

At that he laid one powerful hand on the bar itself, and wrenched it outward across the leverage of its iron loops, and it cracked and broke, and fell to the ground in splinters.

Then her strong excitement lent the brave girl strength, and her fear for her husband gave her courage, and crying, "Stop, for Heaven's sake, stop," she put her back to the door, tore up the

sleeve of her dress, and thrust her bare right arm through the loops where the bar had been.

"Now," she cried, "you must break my arm after it."

"God forbid," said Jason, and he fell back for a moment at that sight. But, recovering himself, he said, "Greeba, I would not touch your beautiful arm to hurt it; no, not for all the wealth of the world. But I must go, so let me pass."

Still her terror was centred on the thought of Jason's vengeance.

"Jason," she cried, "he is my husband. Only think—my husband."

"Let me pass," said Jason.

"Jason," she cried again, "my husband is everything to me, and I am all in all to him."

"Let me pass," said Jason.

"You intend to follow him. You are seeking him to kill him."

"Let me pass."

"Deny it."

"Let me pass."

"Never," she cried. "Kill *me* if you will, but until you have done so you shall not pass this door. Kill me!"

"Not for my soul's salvation!" said Jason.

"Then give up your wicked purpose. Give it up, give it up."

"Only when *he* shall have given up his life."

"Then I warn you, I will show you no pity, for you have shown none to me."

At that she screamed for help, and presently the faint music ceased, and there was a noise of hurrying feet. Jason stood a moment listening; then he looked toward the window, and saw that it was of one frame, and had no sash that opened. At the next instant he had doubled his arms across his face and dashed through glass and bars.

A minute afterwards the room was full of men and women, and Jason was brought back into it, pale, sprinkled with snow and blood-stained.

"I charge that man with threatening the life of my husband." Greeba cried.

Then it seemed as if twenty strong hands laid hold of Jason at once. But no force was needed, for he stood quiet and silent, and looked like a man who had walked in his sleep, and been suddenly awakened by the sound of Greeba's voice. One glance he gave her of great suffering and proud defiance, and then, guarded on either hand, passed out of the place like a captured lion.

CHAPTER IX

THE PEACE OATH

THERE was short shrift for Red Jason. He was tried by the court nearest the spot, and that was the criminal court over which the Bishop in his civil capacity presided, with nine of his neighbors on the bench beside him. From this court an appeal was possible to the Court of the Quarter, and again from the Quarter Court to the High Court of the Althing; but appeal in this case there was none, for there was no defense. And because Icelandic law did not allow of the imprisonment of a criminal until after he had been sentenced, an inquest was called forthwith, lest Jason should escape or compass the crime he had attempted. So the Court of Inquiry sat the same night in the wooden shed that served both for Senate and House of Justice.

The snow was now falling heavily, and the hour was late, but the court-house was thronged. It was a little place—a plain box, bare, featureless, and chill, with walls, roof, and seats of wood, and floor of hard earth. Four short benches were raised, step above step, against the farthest side, and on the highest of these the Bishop sat, with three of his colleagues on each of the three rows beneath him. The prisoner stood on a broad stool to the right, and the witnesses on a like stool to the left. A wooden bar crossed the room about midway, and in the open space between that and the door the spectators were crowded together. The place was lighted by candles, and some were fixed to the walls, others were held by ushers on the end of long sticks, and a few were hung to the roof rafters by hemp ropes tied about their middle. The floor ran like a stream, and the atmosphere was full of the vapor of the snow that was melting on the people's clothes. Nothing could be ruder than the court-house, but the Court that sat here observed a rule of procedure that was almost an idolatry of form.

The prisoner was called by the name of Jason, son of Stephen Orry, and having answered in a voice so hollow that it seemed to come out of the earth beneath him, he rose to his place. His attitude was dull and impassive, and he seemed hardly to see the restless crowd that murmured at sight of him. His tall figure stooped, there was a cloud on his strong brow, and a slow fire in his blood-

shot eyes, and his red hair, long as a woman's, hung in disordered masses down his worn cheeks to his shoulders. The Bishop, a venerable prelate of great age, looked at him and thought, "That man's heart is dead within him."

The spokesman of the Court was a middle-aged man, who was short, had little piercing eyes, a square brush of iron-gray hair that stood erect across the top of his corded forehead, and a crisp, clear utterance, like the crackle of a horse's hoofs on the frost.

Jason was charged with an attempt to take the life of Michael Sunlocks, first President of the second Republic. He did not plead and had no defense, and the witnesses against him spoke only in answer to the leading questions of the judges.

The first of the witnesses was Greeba herself, and her evidence, given in English, was required to be interpreted. All her brave strength was now gone. She trembled visibly. Her eyes were down, her head was bent, her face was half-hidden by the hood of a cloak she wore, and her tones were barely audible. She had little to say. The prisoner had forced his way into Government House, and there, to her own face, had threatened to take the life of her husband. In plain words he had done so, and then made show of going in pursuit of her husband that he might carry out his design.

"Wait," said the Bishop, "your husband was not present?"

"No," said Greeba.

"There was, therefore, no direct violence?"

"None."

"And the whole sum of the prisoner's offense, so far as you know of it, lies in the use of the words that you have repeated?"

"Yes."

Then turning to the spokesman of the Court, the old Bishop said:

"There has been no overt act. This is not an attempt, but a threat to take life. And this is not a crime by the law of this or any other Christian country."

"Your pardon, my lord," said the little man, in his crisp tones. "I will show that the prisoner is guilty of the essential part of murder itself. Murder, my lord," he added, "is not merely to compass the destruction of a life, for there is homicide, by misadventure, there is justifiable homicide, and there are the rights, long recognized by Icelandic law, of the avengers of blood. Murder is to kill in secrecy and after long-harbored malice, and now, my lord, I shall show that the prisoner has lain in wait to slay the President of the Republic."

At that Greeba stood down, and other witnesses followed her. Nearly every one had been summoned with whom Jason had exchanged words since he landed eight days before. There was the lean student who had told him of the drill at the Latin school, the little tailor who had explained the work at the jail, the stuttering doorkeeper at the senate-house, and one of the masons at the fort. Much was made of the fainting in the Cathedral yard, on the Sunday morning, and out of the deaf landlady, the Cathedral caretaker, some startling disclosures seemed to be drawn.

"Still," said the old Bishop, "I see no overt act."

"Good gracious, my lord," said the little spokesman, "are we to wait until the knife itself has been reddened?"

"God forbid!" said the old Bishop.

Then came two witnesses to prove motive. The first of them was the tipsy comrade of former days, who had drawn Jason into the drinking-shop. He could say of his own knowledge that Jason was jealous of the new Governor. The two were brothers in a sort of way. So people said, and so Jason had told him. They had the same father, but different mothers. Jason's mother had been the daughter of the old Governor, who turned his back on her at her marriage. At her death he relented, and tried to find Jason, but could not, and then took up with Michael Sunlocks. People said that was the beginning of the new President's fortune. At all events Jason thought he had been supplanted, was very wroth, and swore he would be revenged.

The second of the two witnesses pointed to a very different motive. He was one of the three Danes who had twice spoken to Jason—the elderly man with the meek and quiet manner. Though himself loyal to the Icelandic Republic he had been much thrown among its enemies. Jason was one of them; he came here as a spy direct from Copenhagen, and his constant associates were Thomsen, an old, white-headed man living in the High Street, and Polvesen, a young and sallow man, who kept one of the stores facing the sea. With these two Jason had been heard by him to plan the assassination of the President.

At this evidence there was a deep murmur among the people, and it was seen that Greeba had risen again to her feet. Her heart burned and stormed within her. She tried to speak but could not. At he same moment Jason turned his bloodshot eyes in her direction, and then her limbs gave way under her, and she sank back with a moan. The Court misread her emotion, and she was removed. Jason's red eyes followed her constantly.

"This is a case for the Warning, not for punishment," said the

Bishop. "It is plainly written in our old Law Book that if a man threatens to slay another man he shall be warned of the gravity of the crime he contemplates and of the penalty attaching to it."

"Gracious heavens, my lord," cried the little spokesman, "what reason have we to assume that this prisoner is ignorant of either? With a life to guard that is prized by friends and precious to the State shall we let this man go free who had sworn before witnesses to destroy it?"

"God forefend!" said the Bishop.

It was lawful to question the prisoner, and so he was questioned.

"Is it true that you have been lying in wait to kill the President?" asked the spokesman.

But Jason made no answer.

"Is it true that you have done so from a desire for personal vengeance?"

No answer.

"Or from political motives?"

No answer.

"Or both?"

Still no answer.

Then the spokesman turned back to the Court. "The stubborn persistence of the prisoner is easy to understand," he said, and smiled.

"Wait," said the old Bishop, and he turned toward Jason:

"Have you any valid plea?"

But Jason gave no sign.

"Listen," said the Bishop. "Though the man who compasses the destruction of a single life is as though he had destroyed a world, for the posterity of him who is dead might have filled a world, yet have all laws of men since the Pentateuch recognized certain conditions that limit the gravity of the crime. If the man who is slain has himself slain the near kindred of his slayer, though the law of Iceland would no longer hold him guiltless, as in the ancient times when evil for evil was the rule and sentence, neither would it punish him as a murderer, who must eat the bread and drink the water of misery all his days. Now what is true of murder must be true of intent to murder, and though I am loth to believe it possible in this instance, honoring and loving as we all do that good man whom you are charged with lying in wait to kill, yet in my duty must I ask you a question—Has Michael Sunlocks spilled blood of your blood, and is it as a redeemer of blood that you go about to slay him?"

There was a dead hush in the little crowded court-house as

Jason lifted his heavy, bloodshot eyes to the Bishop's face and answered, in a weary voice, "I have nothing to say."

Then an aged Lutheran priest, who had sat within the rail, with a snuffbox in his hand and a red print handkerchief across his knee, hobbled up to the witness stool and tendered evidence. He could throw light on the prisoner's hatred of the President, if it was true that the President was a son of Stephen Orry. He knew the prisoner, and had named him in his baptism. He had known the prisoner's mother also, and had sat with her at her death. It was quite true that she was a daughter of the late Governor, and had been badly treated by her father. But she had been yet more badly treated by her husband, who married again while she was still alive, and had another son by the other wife. On her death-bed she had heard of this, and told the prisoner, who then and there, this witness being present, made an awful vow of vengeance upon his father and his father's son.

The old priest was heard in silence, and his words sent a quiver through the court-house. Even Jason, who had shown no interest save when Greeba was removed, lifted up his bloodshot eyes again and listened.

And the Bishop, visibly moved, turned to the Court and said, "Let us put this prisoner back to be tried by the High Court and the Lagmann."

"What, my lord!" cried the little spokesman, with a lofty look, "and set him at liberty in the meantime to carry out the crime he threatens?"

"Heaven forbid!" said the Bishop.

"Remember, until he has been condemned we have no power to hold him," said the spokesman.

The Bishop turned to an usher and said: "Bring me the Statute Book," and the great tome was brought. The Bishop opened it and again turned to the prisoner. "The Almighty," said he, "created one man at the beginning to teach us that all men are brethren, and the law of our old country provides that when two have had disputes and pursued each other on account of hatred, even as brethren they shall make peace before their neighbors. Now listen to the words I shall read to you, and be ready to say if you will swear to them."

Then a great silence fell upon the people, while in solemn tones the old Bishop read the Peace Oath.

"Ye two shall be set at one and live friendly together, at meat and at drink, in the Althing and at meetings, at kirk prayers and in King's palace; and in whatever place else men meet together,

there shall ye be so set at one, as if this quarrel had never come between you. Ye shall share knife and meat together, and all things besides, as friends and not as enemies."

The Bishop paused and looked over his spectacles at Jason, who stood as before, with the cloud on his brow and the slow fire in his deep eyes, but with no sign of feeling or interest.

"Will you promise to swear to this, when he shall have returned who should swear to it with you?" said the Bishop.

Then all eyes turned toward Jason, and there came across his face at that moment the look of a baited dog.

"No," he growled.

The spokesman shifted in his seat and the people grew restless.

"Listen again," said the Bishop, and his long white beard shook and his solemn voice rose to a shrill cry as he twisted back to the book and read:

"But if one of you be so mad that he breaks this truce thus made, and slays after pledges have been made and his blade has reddened, he shall be an outlaw, accursed and driven away, so far as men drive wolves farthest away. He shall be banished of God and all good Christian men, as far as Christian men seek churches, as mothers bring forth sons, son calls mother, flames blaze up, mankind kindle fire, earth is green, sun shines, and snow covers the ground; he shall flee from kirk and Christian men, God's house and mankind, and from every home save hell."

Then there was a pause and a great hush, and the Bishop lifted his eyes from the book, and said:

"Will you swear to it?"

Again all eyes turned toward Jason, and again his face, which had been impassive, took the look of a baited dog.

"No, no, no!" he cried in a loud voice, and then the great silence was broken by deep murmurs.

"It is useless," said the spokesman. "Warnings or peace oaths, though still valid, are the machinery of another age. This prisoner is not ignorant of the gravity of the crime he contemplates, nor yet of the penalty attaching to it."

There was an audible murmur of assent from the people.

"That's true," said one. "It's the truest word spoken to-night," said another. "The old man is all for mercy," said a third. "It isn't safe," said a fourth. And there was other whispering, and much nodding of heads and shuffling of feet.

Encouraged by these comments the little spokesman added:

"In any other country at this age of the world a man who tacitly

admitted a design to take life would be promptly clapped into prison."

"Ay, ay," the people muttered, but the Bishop drew himself up and said: "In any other country a criminal who showed no fear of the death that hung over him would be straightway consigned to a madhouse."

"We have no madhouse in this island, my lord," said the little spokesman, "save the Sulphur Mines, and there he must go."

"Wait," said the Bishop, and once again he turned to the prisoner. "If this Court should agree to ship you out of Iceland will you promise never more to return to it?"

For the third time all eyes were turned on Jason, but he did not seem to hear the Bishop's question.

"Will you promise?" said the Bishop again.

"No," said Jason.

"Dangerous trifling," said the spokesman. "When you seize a mad dog you strangle it."

"Ay, ay," cried many voices at once, and great excitement prevailed.

The old Bishop drew back with a sigh of relief. He loved Michael Sunlocks and had been eager to save him. He pitied Greeba, and for her sake also had been anxious to protect her husband. But from the moment he saw Jason and thought, "That man's heart is dead within him," his love had struggled with his sense of duty. As the trial went on he had remembered Jason and recalled his bitter history, and seized with a strong sympathy he had strained every nerve to keep back his punishment. He had done all he could do, he had nothing to reproach himself with, and full of a deep and secret joy at the certainty of the safety of Sunlocks, he now fell back that the law might take its course.

The Court was counted out, and then the Bishop turned for the last time to Jason, and delivered judgment. "The sentence of this Court," he said, "is that you be removed from here to the Sulphur Mines, and be kept there six months certain, and as long thereafter as you refuse to take the Oath of Peace pledging yourself forever, as long as you live or the world endures, to be at one with your enemy as brothers before all men living."

Now Greeba alone knew the truth about Jason. When she had fled from Man without word or warning it had not been out of fear of him, but of her brothers. Her meeting with Michael Sunlocks, her short stay with the good old Bishop Petersen, her marriage, and the festival that followed, had passed her by like a dream. Then came the first short parting with Sunlocks when he

had said, "I must leave you for a fortnight, for the men I sent in search of your father have blundered and returned without him." She had cried a little at that, and he had kissed her, and made a brave show of his courage, though she could see the tears in his own big shining eyes. But it was all a dream, a sweet and happy dream, and only by the coming of Jason had the dream been broken.

Then followed her terror, her plea, her fear for her husband's life, her defiance of Jason, and the charge she made against him.

And the first burst of her passion over, she had thought to herself, "My husband is safe, but Jason will now tell all and I shall be a lost and ruined woman," for nothing had she yet said to Michael Sunlocks concerning the man who had wooed and won and released her during the long years of his silence and her trouble. "He will hear the story now," she thought, "and not from my lips but from Jason's."

Being then so far immersed, she could not but go on, and so she had allowed herself to be led to the court-house. No one there had thought to ask her if she had known anything of Jason before that day, and she on her part had said nothing of knowing him. But when Jason had looked at her with eyes of reproach that seemed to go through her soul, he seemed to be saying, "This is but half the truth. Dare you not tell the rest?"

Then listening to the lying of other witnesses, and looking up at Jason's face, so full of pain, and seeing how silent he was under cruel perjury, she remembered that this man's worst crime had been his love of her, and so she staggered to her feet to confess everything.

When she came to herself after that, she was back in her own home—her new home, the home of her happy dream, her husband's home and hers, and there her first fear returned to her. "He will tell all," she thought, "and evil tongues will make it worse, and shame will fall upon my husband, and I shall be lost, lost, lost."

She waited with feverish impatience for the coming of the Bishop to tell her the result of the trial, and at length he came.

"What have they done with him?" she cried; and he told her.

"What defense did he make?" she asked.

"None," said the Bishop.

"What did he say?" she asked again.

"Not a word but 'No,'" said the Bishop.

Then she drew a long breath of immense relief, and at the next instant she reproached herself. How little of soul she had been! And how great of heart had been Jason! He could have wrecked her life with a word, but he had held his peace. She had sent him

to prison, and rather than smite he had suffered himself to be smitten. She felt herself small and mean.

And the Bishop, having, as he thought, banished Greeba's terror, hobbled to the door, for now the hour was very late, and the snow was still falling.

"The poor soul will do your good husband no mischief now. Poor lad! poor lad! After all, he is more fit for a madhouse than for a prison. Good-night, my child, good-night."

And so the good old man went his way.

It was intended that Jason should start for the Sulphur Mines on the following day, and he was lodged overnight in a little house of detention that stood on the south of the High Street. But the snow continued to fall the whole night through, and in the morning the roads were impassable. Then it was decided to postpone the long journey until the storm should have passed, the frost set in, and the desolate white wastes to be crossed become hard and firm. It was now Wednesday of the second week in October—the Gore-month—and the people were already settling down to the long rest of the Icelandic winter. The merchants began to sleep the livelong day in their deserted stores in the cheapstead, and the bonders, who had come up with the last of their stock, to drink and doze in the taverns. All that day the snow fell in fine dust like flour, until, white as it was, the air grew dark with it. At the late dawn of the next day the snow was still falling, and a violent gale had then risen. Another and another and yet another day went by, and still the snow fell and the gale continued. For two days there was no daylight, and only at noon through the giddy air a fiery glow burned for an hour along the southern sky and then went out. Nothing could be seen of fell or fiord, and nothing could be heard save the baying of the hounds at night and the roar of the sea at all times, for the wind made no noise in the soft snow, but drove it along in sheets like silent ghosts.

Never before had Greeba seen anything so terrible; and still more fearful than the great snow itself was the anxiety it brought her. Where was Michael Sunlocks? Where was her father? There was only one other whose condition troubled her, and she knew too well where he was—he was lying in the dark cell of the dark house in the High Street.

While the storm lasted all Reykjavik lay asleep, and Greeba could do nothing. But one morning when she awoke and turned to the window, as was her wont, to learn if the weary snow was still falling, she could see nothing at first for the coating of ice and hoar frost that covered the glass. But the snow had ceased, the wind

had fallen, the air was clear, and the light was coming. The buildings of the town, from the Cathedral to the hovels of the fishing quarter, looked like snow mounds in the desert; the black waste of lava was gone; the black beach was gone; the black jokulls were gone; the black headland was gone that had stretched like a giant hand of many fingers into the black fiord; but height above height, and length beyond length, as far as from sea to sky, and from sea to sea, the world lay lifeless and silent and white around her.

Then, the town being once more awake, Greeba had news of Jason. It came through a little English maid, whom Sunlocks had found for her, from Oscar, the young man who had gone out in search of her father and returned without him. Jason was ill. Five days he had eaten nothing, and nothing had he drunk except water. He was in a fever—a brain fever—and it was now known for certain that he was the man who had fainted outside the Cathedral on the marriage morning, that he had been ill ever since then, and that the druggist of the High Street had bled him.

With these tidings Greeba hurried away to the Bishop.

"The poor man has brain fever," she said. "He was ill when he made the threat, and when he recovers he will regret it; I am sure he will—I know he will. Set him at liberty, for mercy's sake," she cried; and she trembled as she spoke, lest in the fervor of her plea the Bishop should read her secret.

But he only shook his head and looked tenderly down at her, and said very gently, though every word went to her heart like a stab:

"Ah, it is like a good woman to plead for one who has injured her. But no, my child, no; it may not be. Poor lad, no one now can do anything for him save the President himself; and he is not likely to liberate a man who lies in wait to kill him."

"He *is* likely," thought Greeba, and straightway she conceived of a plan. She would go to Jason in his prison. Yes, she herself would go to him, and prevail with him to put away all thoughts of vengeance and be at peace with her husband. Then she would wait for the return of Michael Sunlocks, and plead with that dear heart that could deny her nothing, to grant her Jason's pardon. Thus it would come about that she, who had stood between these two to separate them, would at length stand between them to bring them together.

So thinking, and crying a little, like a true woman, at the prospect of so much joy, she waited for Jason's recovery that she might carry her purpose into effect. Meantime she contrived to

send him jellies and soups, such as might tempt the appetite of a sick man. She thought she sent them secretly, but with less than a woman's wit she employed a woman on her errand. This person was the little English maid, and she handed over the duty to Oscar, who was her sweetheart. Oscar talked openly of what he was doing, and thus all Reykjavik knew that the tender-hearted young wife of the Governor held communications of some sort with the man whom she had sent to jail.

Then one day, on hearing that Jason was better, though neither was he so well as to travel nor was the snow hard enough to walk upon, Greeba stole across to the prison in the dark of the afternoon, saying nothing to any one of her mission or intention.

The stuttering doorkeeper of the Senate was the jailer, and he betrayed great concern when Greeba asked to see his prisoner, showing by his ghastly looks, for his words would not come, that it would be rash on her part, after helping so much toward Jason's imprisonment, to trust herself in his presence.

"But what have I to fear?" she thought; and with a brave smile, she pushed her way through.

She found Jason in a square box built of heavy piles, laid horizontally both for walls and roof, dark and damp and muggy, lighted in the day by a hole in the wood not larger than a man's hand, and in the night by a sputtering candle hung from the rafters. He sat on a stool; his face was worn, his head was close-cropped to relieve the heat of his brain, and on the table by his side lay all his red hair, as long as his mother's was when it fell to the shears of the Jew on the wharf.

He gave no sign when Greeba entered, though he knew she was there, but sat with his face down and one hand on the table.

"Jason," she said, "I am ashamed. It is I who have brought you to this. Forgive me! forgive me! But my husband's life was in danger, and what was I to do?"

Still he gave no sign.

"Jason," she said again, "you have heaped coals of fire on my head; for I have done nothing but injure you, and though you might have done as much for me you never have."

At that the fingers of his hand on the table grasped the edge of it convulsively.

"But, Jason," she said, "all is not lost yet. No, for I can save you still. Listen. You shall give me your promise to make peace with my husband, and when my husband returns he will grant me your pardon. Oh, yes, I know he will, for he is tender-hearted and he will forgive you; yes, he will forgive you—"

"My curse on him and his forgiveness," cried Jason, rising suddenly and bringing down his fist on the table. "Who is he that he should forgive me? It has not been for his sake that I have been silent, with the devil at my side urging me to speak. And for all that *you* have made me to suffer *he* shall yet pay double. Let it go on; let him send me away; let him bury me at his mines. But I shall live to find him yet. Something tells me that I shall not die until I have met with that man face to face."

And Greeba went back home with these mad words ringing in her ears. "It is useless to try," she thought. "I have done all I can. My husband is before everything. I shall say nothing to him now."

None the less she cried very bitterly, and was still crying when at bedtime her little English maid came up to her and chattered of the news of the day. It seemed that some Danish storekeepers on the cheapstead had lately been arrested as spies, brought to trial, and condemned.

When Greeba awoke next morning, after a restless night, while the town still lay asleep, and only the croak of the ravens from the rocks above the fiord broke the silence of the late dawn, she heard the hollow tread of many footsteps on the frozen snow of the Thingvellir road and peering out through the window, which was coated with hoar frost, she saw a melancholy procession. Three men, sparsely clad in thin tunics, snow stockings, and skin caps, walked heavily in file, chained together hand to hand and leg to leg, with four armed warders, closely muffled to the ears, riding leisurely beside them. They were prisoners bound for the sulphur mines of Krisuvik. The first of them was Jason, and he swung along with his long stride and his shorn head thrown back and his pallid face held up. The other two were old Thomsen and young Polvesen, the Danish storekeepers.

It was more than Greeba could bear to look upon that sight, for it brought back the memory of that other sight on that other morning, when Jason came leaping down to her from the mountains, over gorse and cushag and hedge and ditch. So she turned her head away and covered her eyes with her hands. And then one—two—three—four—the heavy footsteps went on over the snow.

The next thing she knew was that her English maid was in her bedroom, saying, "Some strangers in the kitchen are asking for you. They are Englishmen, and have just come ashore, and they call themselves your brothers."

CHAPTER X

THE FAIRBROTHERS

Now when the Fairbrothers concluded that they could never give rest to their tender consciences until they had done right by their poor sister Greeba they set themselves straightway to consider the ways and means. Ballacraine they must sell in order that its proceeds might be taken to Greeba as her share and interest; but Ballacraine belonged to Jacob, and another provision would forthwith need to be made for him. So after much arguing and some nagging across the hearth of the kitchen at Lague it was decided that each of Jacob's five brothers should mortgage his farm to one-sixth its value, and that the gross sum of their five-sixths should be Jacob's for his share. This arrangement would have the disadvantage of leaving Jacob without land, but he showed a magnanimous spirit in that relation. "Don't trouble about me," said he, "it's sweet and nice to do a kindness to your own brothers."

And four of his brethren applauded that sentiment, but Thurstan curled up his red nose and thought, "Aw, yes, of coorse, a powerful big boiler of brotherly love the little miser keeps going under his weskit."

And having so decided they further concluded to see the crops off the ground, and then lose no time in carrying out their design. "Let's wait for the melya," said Asher, meaning the harvest-home, "and then off for Marky the Lord." The person who went by this name was one Mark Skillicorn, an advocate, of Ramsey, who combined the functions of pettifogger with those of money-lender and auctioneer. Marky the Lord was old, and plausible and facetious. He was a distant relative of the Fairbrothers by the side of their mother's French family; and it was a strange chain of circumstances that no big farmer ever got into trouble but he became a client of Marky the Lord's, that no client of Marky the Lord's did not in the end go altogether to the bad, and that poor Marky the Lord never had a client who did not die in his debt. Nevertheless, Marky the Lord grew richer as his losses grew heavier, and more facetious as his years increased. Oh, he was a funny dog, was Marky the Lord; but there was just one dog on the island a shade or two funnier

still, and that was Jacob Fairbrother. This thrifty soul had for many a year kept a nest of private savings, and even in the days when he and his brethren went down to make a poor mouth before their father at Castletown he had money secretly lent out on the conscientious interest of only three per cent above the legal rate.

And thus it chanced that when Ballacraine was advertised in big letters on every barn door in the north of Man, Jacob Fairbrother went down to Marky the Lord, and made a private bargain to buy it in again. So when the day of the sale came, and Marky the Lord strode over the fields with some thirty men—farmers, miners, advocates, and parsons—at his heels, and then drew up on the roadside by the "Hibernian," and there mounted the tail-board of a cart for the final reckoning, little Jacob was too much moved to be present, though his brothers were there, all glooming around on the outside of the group, with their hands in their breeches pockets.

Ballacraine was knocked down cheap to somebody that nobody knew, and then came the work of the mortgages; so once again Jacob went off to Marky the Lord, and bargained to be made mortgagor, though no one was to be a whit the wiser. And ten per cent he was to get from each of his five brothers for the use of the money which next day came back to his own hands.

Thus far all was straight dealing, but with the approach of the time to go to Iceland the complications grew thick. Jacob had so husbanded his money that while seeming to spend he still possessed it, and now he was troubled to know where to lodge that portion of it which he should not want in Iceland and might find it unsafe to take there. And while he was in the throes of his uncertainty his brothers—all save John—were in the travail of their own big conception.

Now Asher, Stean, Ross, and Thurstan, having each made up his mind that he would go to Iceland also, had to consider how to get there, for the late bargaining had left them all penniless. The proceeds of the sale of Ballacraine were lodged with Jacob for Greeba, and Jacob also held as his own what had come to each man from his mortgage. So thinking that Jacob must have more than he could want, they approached him one by one, confidentially and slyly. And wondrous were the lies they told him, for they dared not confess that their sole need of money was to go to Iceland after him, and watch him that he did not cheat them when Greeba sent them all their fortunes in return for their brotherly love of her.

Thus Asher took Jacob aside and whispered, "I'm morthal hard pressed for a matter of five-and-thirty pound, boy—just five-and-

thirty, for draining and fencing. I make bold to think you'll lend me the like of it, and six per cent I'll be paying reg'lar."

"Ah, I can't do it, Asher," said Jacob, "for old Marky the Lord has stripped me."

Then came Stean, plucking a bit of ling and looking careless, and he said, "I've got a fine thing on now. I can buy a yoke of plowing oxen for thirty pound. Only thirty, and a dead bargain. Can you lend me the brass? But whisht's the word, for Ross is sneaking after them."

"Very sorry, Stean," said Jacob, "but Ross has been here before you, and I've just lent him the money."

Ross himself came next, and said, "I borrowed five-and-twenty pound from Stean a bit back, and he's not above threatening to sell me up for a dirty little debt like that. Maybe ye'd tide me over the trouble and say nothing to Stean."

"Make your mind easy, Ross," said Jacob, "Stean told me himself, and I've paid him all you owe him."

So these two went their ways and thereafter eyed each other threateningly, but neither dared explode, for both had their secret fear. And last of all came Thurstan, made well drunk for the better support of his courage, and he maudled and cried, "What d'ye think? Poor Ballabeg is dead—him that used to play the fiddle at church—and the old parson wants me to take Ballabeg's place up in the gallery-loft. Says I'd be wonderful good at the viol-bass. I wouldn't mind doing it neither, only it costs such a power of money, a viol-bass does—twenty pound maybe."

"Well, what of that?" said Jacob, interrupting him. "The parson says he'll lend you the money. He told me so himself."

With such shrewd answers did Jacob escape from the danger of lending to his brothers, whom he could not trust. But he lost no time in going down to Marky the Lord and offering his money to be lent out on interest with good security. Knowing nothing of this, Asher, Stean, Ross, and Thurstan each in his turn stole down to Marky the Lord to borrow the sum he needed. And Marky the Lord kept his own worthy counsel and showed no unwise eagerness. First he said to Jacob, "I can lend out your money on good security."

"Who to?" said Jacob.

"That I've given my word not to tell. What interest do you want?"

"Not less than twelve per cent," said the temperate Jacob.

"I'll get it," said Marky the Lord, and Jacob went away with a sly smile.

Then said Marky the Lord to each of the borrowers in turn, "I can find you the money."

"Whose is it?" asked Asher, who came the first.

"That I've sworn not to tell," said Marky the Lord.

"What interest?"

"Only four per cent to my friend."

"Well, and that's reasonable, and he's a right honest, well-meaning man, whoever he is," said Asher.

"That he is, friend," said Marky the Lord, "but as he had not got the money himself he had to borrow it of an acquaintance, and pay ten per cent for the convenience."

"So he wants fourteen per cent!" cried Asher. "Shoo! Lord save us! Oh, the grasping miser. It's outrageous. I'll not pay it —the Nightman fly away with me if I do."

"You need be under no uneasiness about that," said Marky the Lord, "for I've three other borrowers ready to take the money the moment you say you won't."

"Hand it out," said Asher, and away he went, fuming.

Then Stean, Ross, and Thurstan followed, one by one, and each behaved as Asher had done before him. When the transaction was complete, and the time had come to set sail for Iceland, many and wonderful were the shifts of the four who had formed the secret design to conceal their busy preparations. But when all was complete, and berths taken, all six in the same vessel, Jacob and Gentleman John rode round the farms of Lague to bid a touching farewell to their brethren.

"Good-by, Thurstan," said Jacob, sitting on the cross-board of the cart. "We've had arguments in our time, and fallen on some rough harm in the course of them, but we'll meet for peace and quietness in heaven some day."

"We'll meet before that," thought Thurstan.

And when Jacob and John were gone on toward Ramsey, Thurstan mounted the tail-board of his own cart and followed. Meantime Asher, Stean, and Ross were on their journey, and because they did not cross on the road they came face to face for the first time, all six together, each lugging his kit of clothes behind him, on the deck of the ship that was to take them to Iceland. Then Jacob's pale face grew livid.

"What does this mean?" he cried.

"It means that we can't trust you," said Thurstan.

"None of you?" said Jacob.

"None of us, seemingly," said Thurstan, glancing round into the confused faces about him.

"What! Not your own brother?" said Jacob.

"'Near is my shirt, but nearer is my skin,' as the saying is," said Thurstan, with a sneer.

"'Poor once, poor forever,' as the saying is," mocked Jacob. "Last week you hadn't twenty pound to buy your viol-bass to play in the gallery-loft."

Stean laughed at that, and Jacob turned hotly upon him. "And *you* hadn't thirty pound to buy your yoke of oxen that Ross was sneaking after."

Then Ross made a loud guffaw, and Jacob faced about to him. "And maybe *you've* paid back your dirty five-and-twenty pound that Stean threatened to sell you up for?"

Then Stean glowered hard at Ross, and Ross looked black at Stean, and Asher almost burst his sides with laughter.

"And you, too, my dear eldest brother," said Jacob, bitterly, "you have the advantage of me in years but not in wisdom. You thought, like the rest of them, to get the money out of me, to help you to follow me and watch me. So that was it, was it? But I was too much for you, my dear brother, and you had to go elsewhere for your draining and ditching."

"So I had, bad cess to you," said Asher; "and fourteen per cent I had to pay for the shabby loan I got."

At that Stean and Ross and Thurstan pricked up their ears.

"And did *you* pay fourteen per cent?" said Stean.

"I did, bad cess to Marky the Lord, and the grasping old miser behind him, whoever he is."

And now it was Jacob's turn to look amazed.

"Wait," he said; "I don't like the look of you."

"Then shut your eyes," said Thurstan.

"Did Marky the Lord lend you the money?" asked Jacob of Asher.

"Ay, he did," said Asher.

"And *you*, too?" said Jacob, turning stiffly to Stean.

"Ay," said Stean.

"And *you?*" said Jacob, facing toward Ross.

"I darn say no," said Ross.

"And *you*, as well?" said Jacob, confronting Thurstan.

"Why not?" said Thurstan.

"The blockhead!" cried Jacob. "The scoundrel! It was *my* money—mine—mine, I tell you, and he might as well have pitched it into the sea."

Then the four men began to double their fists.

"Wait!" said Asher. "Are you the grasping young miser that asked fourteen per cent?"

"He is, clear enough," said Stean.

"Well," said Thurstan, "I really think—look you, boys, I really do think, but I speak under correction—I really think, all things considered, this Jacob is a damned rascal."

"I may have the advantage of him in years," said Asher, doubling up his sleeves, "but if I can't—"

"Go to the devil," said Jacob, and he went below, boiling hot with rage.

It was idle to keep up the quarrel, for very soon all six were out on the high seas, bound to each other's company at bed and board, and doomed to pass the better part of a fortnight together. So before they came to Iceland they were good friends, after their fashion, though that was perhaps the fashion of cat and mouse, and being landed at Reykjavik they were once more in their old relations, with Jacob as purse-bearer and spokesman.

"And now listen," said that thrifty person. "What's it saying? 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.' We've got our bird in the hand, haven't we?"

"So we have," said Asher; "six hundred golden pounds that Ballacraine fetched at the sale."

"Just so," said Jacob; "and before we part with it let us make sure about the two in the bush."

With that intention they started inquiries, as best they could; touching the position of Michael Sunlocks, his salary and influence.

And in spite of the difficulties of language they heard and saw enough to satisfy them. Old Iceland was awakening from a bad dream of three bad centuries and setting to work with a will to become a power among the States; the young President, Michael Sunlocks, was the restorer and protector of her liberties; fame and honor were before him, and before all who laid a hand to his plow. This was what they heard in many jargons on every side.

"It's all right," whispered Jacob, "and now for the girl."

They had landed late in the day of Greeba's visit to Red Jason at the little house of detention, and had heard of her marriage, of its festivities, and of the attempt on the life of the President. But though they knew that Jason was no longer in Man they were too much immersed in their own vast schemes to put two and two together, until next morning they came upon the sad procession bound for the Sulphur Mines, and saw that Jason was one of the

prisoners. They were then on their way to Government House, and Jacob said with a wink, "Boys, that's worth remembering. When did it do any harm to have two strings to your bow?"

The others laughed at that, and John nudged Thurstan and said, "Isn't he a boy?" And Thurstan grunted and trudged on.

When they arrived at the kitchen door of the house they asked for Greeba by her new name, and after some inarticulate fencing with a fat Icelandic cook, the little English maid was brought down to them.

"Leave her to me," whispered Jacob, and straightway he tackled her.

Could they see the mistress? What about? Well, it was a bit of a private matter, but no disrespect to herself, miss. Aw, yes, they were Englishmen—that's to say a sort of Englishmen—being Manxmen. Would the mistress know them? Ay, go bail on that. Eh, boys? Ha! ha! Fact was they were her brothers, miss. Yes, her brothers, all six of them, and longing mortal to clap eyes again on their sweet little sister.

And after that Master Jacob addressed himself adroitly to an important question, and got most gratifying replies. Oh, yes, the President loved his young wife beyond words; worshiped the very ground she walked on, as they say. And, oh, yes, she had great, great influence with him, and he would do any thing in the wide world to please her.

"That'll do," whispered Jacob over his shoulder, as the little maid tripped away to inform her mistress. "I'll give that girl a shilling when she comes again," he added.

"And give her another for me," said Stean.

"And me," said Asher.

"Seeing that I've no land at home now I wouldn't mind staying here when you all go back," said Jacob.

"I'll sell you mine, Jacob," said Thurstan.

The maid returned to ask them to follow, and they went after her, stroking their lank hair smooth on their foreheads, and studying the remains of the snow on their boots. When they came to the door of the room where they were to meet with Greeba, Jacob whispered to the little maid, "I'll give you a crown when I come out again." Then he twisted his face over his shoulder and said, "Do as I do; d'ye hear?"

"*Isn't* he a boy?" chuckled Gentleman John.

Then into the room they passed, one by one, all six in file. Greeba was standing by a table, erect, quivering, with flashing eyes, and the old trembling on both sides of her heart. Jacob and John

instantly went down on one knee before her, and their four lumbering brethren behind made shift to do the same.

"So we have found you at last, thank God," said Jacob, in a mighty burst of fervor.

"Thank God, thank God," the others echoed.

"Ah, Greeba," said Jacob, in a tone of sorrowful reproach, "why ever did you go away without warning, and leave us all so racked with suspense? You little knew how you grieved us, seeming to slight our love and kindness toward you—"

"Stop," said Greeba. "I know too well what your love and kindness have been to me. Why have you come?"

"Don't say that," said Jacob, sadly, "for see what we have made free to fetch you—six hundred pound," he added, lugging a bag and a roll of paper out of his pocket.

"Six hundred golden pounds," repeated the others.

"It's your share of Lague—your full share, Greeba, woman," said Jacob, deliberately, "and every penny of it is yours; so take it, and may it bring you a blessing, Greeba. And don't think unkind of us because we have held it back until now, for we kept it from you for your own good, seeing plain there was some one harking after you for sake of what you had, and fearing your good money would thereby fall into evil hands, and you be made poor and penniless."

"Ay, ay," muttered the others, "that Jason—that Red Jason."

"But he's gone now, and serve him right," said Jacob, "and you're wedded to the right man, praise God."

So saying he shambled to his feet, and his brothers did likewise.

But Greeba stood without moving, and said through her compressed lips, "How did you know that I was here?"

"The letter, the letter," Asher blurted out, and Jacob gave him a side-long look, and then said:

"Ye see, dear, it was this way. When you were gone, and we didn't know where to look for you, and were sore grieved to think you'd maybe left us in anger, not rightly seeing our drift toward you, we could do nothing but sit about and fret for you. And one day we were turning over some things in a box, just to bring back the memory of you, when what should we find but a letter writ to you by the good man himself."

"Ay, Sunlocks—Michael Sunlocks," said Stean.

"And a right good man he is, beyond gainsay; and he knows how to go through life, and I always said it," said Asher.

And Jacob continued, "So said I; 'Boys,' I said, 'now we know where she is, and that by this time she must have married the man

she ought, let's do the right by her and sell Ballacraine, and take her the money and give her joy.'"

"So you did, so you did," said John.

"And we sold it dirt cheap, too," said Jacob, "but you're not the loser; no, for here is a full seventh of all Lague straight to your hand."

"Give me the money," said Greeba.

"And there it is dear," said Jacob, fumbling the notes and the gold to count them, while his brethren, much gratified by this sign of Greeba's complacency, began to stretch their legs from the easy chairs about them.

"And a pretty penny it has cost us to fetch it," said John. "We've had to pinch ourselves to do it, I can tell you."

"How much has it cost you?" said Greeba.

"No matter of that," interrupted Jacob, with a lofty sweep of the hand.

"Let me pay you back what you have spent in coming," said Greeba.

"Not a pound of it," said Jacob. "What's a matter of forty or fifty pounds to any of us, compared to doing what's right by our own flesh and blood?"

"Let me pay you," said Greeba, turning to Asher, and Asher was for holding out his hand, but Jacob, coming behind him, tugged at his coat, and so he drew back and said:

"Aw, no, child; I couldn't touch it for my life."

"Then *you*," said Greeba to Thurstan, and Thurstan looked as hungry as a hungry gull at the bait that was offered him, but just then Jacob was coughing most lamentably. So with a wry face, that was all colors at once, Thurstan answered: "Aw, Greeba, woman, do you really think a poor man has got no feelings? Don't press it, woman, you'll hurt me."

Recking nothing of these refusals Greeba tried each of the others in turn, and getting the same answer from all, she wheeled about, saying, "Very well, be it so," and quickly locked the money in the drawer of a cabinet. This done, she said sharply, "Now, you can go."

"Go?" they cried, looking up from their seats in bewilderment.

"Yes," she said, "before my husband returns."

"Before he returns?" said Jacob. "Why, Greeba, we wish to see him."

"You had better not wait," said Greeba, "he might remember what you appear to forget."

"Why," said Jacob, with every accent of incredulity, "and isn't

he our brother, so to say, brought up in the house of our own father?"

"And he knows what you did for our poor father, who wouldn't lie shipwrecked now but for your heartless cruelty," said Greeba.

"Greeba, lass, Greeba, lass," Jacob protested, "don't say he wouldn't take kind to the own brothers of his own wife."

"He also knows what you did for her," said Greeba, "and the sorry plight you brought her to."

"What!" cried Jacob, "you never mean to say you are going to show an ungrateful spirit, Greeba, after all we've brought you?"

"Small thanks to you for that, after defrauding me so long," said Greeba.

"What! Keeping you from marrying that cheating knave?" cried Jacob.

"You kept me from nothing but my just rights," said Greeba. "Now go—go."

Her words fell on them like swords that smote them hip and thigh, and like sheep they huddled together with looks of amazement and fear.

"Why, Greeba, you don't mean to turn us out of the house," said Jacob.

"And if I do," said Greeba, "it is no more than you did for our dear old father, but less; for that house was his, while this is mine, and you ought to be ashamed to show your wicked faces inside its doors."

"Oh, the outrageous little atomy," cried Asher.

"This is the thanks you get for crossing the seas to pay people what there was never no call to give them," said Stean.

"Oh, bad cess to it all," cried Ross, "I'll take what it cost me to come, and get away straight. Give it me, and I'm off."

"No," said Greeba, "I'll have no half measures. You refused what I offered you, and now you shall have nothing."

"Och, the sly slut—the crafty young minx," cried Ross, "to get a hold of the money first."

"Hush, boys, leave it to me," said Jacob. "Greeba," he said, in a voice of deep sorrow, "I never should have believed it of you—you that was always so kind and loving to strangers, not to speak of your own kith and kin—"

"Stop that," cried Greeba, lifting her head proudly, her eyes flashing, and the woman all over aflame. "Do you think I don't see through your paltry schemes? You defrauded me when I was poor and at your mercy, and now when you think I am rich, and could do you a service, you come to me on your knees. But I

spurn you, you mean, groveling men, you that impoverished my father and then turned your backs upon him, you that plotted against my husband and would now lick the dust under his feet. Get out of my house, and never darken my doors again. Come here no more, I tell you, or I will disown you. Go—go!"

And just as sheep they had huddled together, so as sheep she swept them out before her. They trooped away through the kitchen and past the little English maid, but their eyes were down and they did not see her.

"Did ye give her that crown piece?" asked Thurstan, looking into Jacob's eyes. But Jacob said nothing—he only swore a little.

"The numskull!" muttered Thurstan. "The tomfool! The booby! The mooncalf! The jobbernow! I was a fool to join his crack-brained scheme."

"I always said it would come to nothing," said Asher, "and we've thrown away five and thirty pound apiece, and fourteen per cent for the honor of doing it."

"It's his money, though—the grinding young miser—and may he whistle till he gets it," said Thurstan.

"Oh, yes, you're a pretty pack of wise asses, you are," said Jacob, bitterly. "Money thrown away, is it? You've never been so near to your fortune in your life."

"How is that?" asked the other five at once.

"How is it that Red Jason has gone to prison? For threatening Michael Sunlocks? Very likely," said Jacob, with a curl of the lip.

"What then?" said John.

"For threatening herself," said Jacob. "She has lied about it."

"And what if she has? Where's our account in that?" said Asher.

"Where? Why, with her husband," said Jacob, and four distinct whistles answered him.

"You go bail Michael Sunlocks knows less than we know," Jacob added, "and maybe we might tell him something that would be worth a trifle."

"What's that?" asked John.

"That she loved Red Jason, and ought to have married him," said Jacob; "but threw him up after they had been sweethearting together, because he was poor, and then came to Iceland and married Michael Sunlocks because he was rich."

"Chut! Numskull again! He'd never believe you," said Thurstan.

"Would he not?" said Jacob, "then maybe he would believe his own eyes. Look there," and he drew a letter out of his pocket.

It was the abandoned letter that Greeba wrote to Jason.

"*Isn't* he a boy!" chuckled Gentleman John.

Two days longer they stayed at Reykjavik, and rambled idly about the town, much observed by the Icelanders and Danes for their monkey jackets of blue Manx cloth, and great sea boots up to their thighs. Early on the afternoon of the second day they sighted, from the new embankment where they stood and watched the masons, a ship coming up the fiord from the Smoky Point. It was a brig, with square sails set, and as she neared the port she ran up a flag to the masthead. The flag was the Icelandic flag, the banner of the Vikings, the white falcon on the blue ground, and the Fairbrothers noticed that at the next moment it was answered by a like flag on the flag-staff of Government House.

"He's coming, he's yonder," said Jacob, flapping his hands under his armpits to warm them.

In a few minutes they saw that there was a flutter over the smooth surface of the life of the town, and that small groups of people were trooping down to the jetty. Half an hour later the brig ran into harbor, dropped anchor below the lava reef, and sent its small boat ashore. Three men sat in the boat; the two sailors who rowed, and a gentleman who sat on the seat between them. The gentleman was young, flaxen-haired, tall, slight, with a strong yet winsome face, and clad in a squirrel-skin coat and close-fitting squirrel-skin cap. When the boat grounded by the jetty he leaped ashore with a light spring, smiled and nodded to the many who touched their hats to him, hailed others with a hearty word, and then swung into the saddle of a horse that stood waiting for him, and rode away at an eager trot in the direction of Government House.

It was Michael Sunlocks.

CHAPTER XI

THE PARDON

When the men whom Michael Sunlocks sent into the interior after Adam Fairbrother and his shipwrecked company returned to him empty-handed, he perceived that they had gone astray by crossing a great fiord lying far east of Hekla when they should have followed the course of it down to the sea. So, counting the time that had been wasted, he concluded to take ship to a point of the

southern coast in the latitude of the Westmann Islands, thinking to meet old Adam somewhere by the fiord's mouth. The storm delayed him, and he reached the fiord too late; but he came upon some good news of Adam there: that, all well, though sore beset by the hard weather, and enfeebled by the misfortunes that had befallen them, the little band of ship-broken men had, three days before his own coming, passed up the western bank of the fiord on foot, going slowly and heavily laden, but under the safe charge of a guide from Stappen.

Greatly cheered in heart at these good tidings Michael Sunlocks had ordered a quick return, for it was unsafe, and perhaps impossible, to follow up through the narrow chasms of the fiord in a ship under sail. On getting back to Reykjavik he intended to take ponies across country in the direction of Thingvellir, hoping to come upon old Adam and his people before they reached the lake or the great chasm on the western side of the valley, known as the Chasm of All Men.

And thinking, amid the flutter of joyful emotions, that on the overland journey he would surely take Greeba with him, for he could never bear to be so long parted from her again, all his heart went back to her in sweet visions as his ship sped over the sea. Her beauty, her gentleness, her boldness, her playful spirits, and all her simple loving ways came flowing over him wave after wave, and then in one great swelling flood. And in the night watches, looking over the dark waters, and hearing nothing but their deep moan, he could scarce believe his fortune, being so far away from the sight of her light figure, and from the hearing of her sweet voice, that she was his—his love, his wife, his darling. A hundred tender names he would call her then, having no ear to hear him but the melancholy waves, no tongue to echo him but the wailing wind, and no eye to look upon him but the eye of night.

And many a time on that homeward voyage, while the sails bellowed out to the fair breeze that was carrying him to her, he asked himself however he had been able to live so long without her, and whether he could live without her now if evil chance plunged his great happiness into greater grief. Thinking so, he recalled the day of her coming, and the message he got from the ship in the harbor saying she had come before her time, and how he had hastened down, and into the boat, and across the bay, and aboard, with a secret trembling lest the years might have so changed her as to take something from her beauty, or her sweetness, or her goodness, or yet the bounding playfulness that was half the true girl's charm. But oh, the delicious undeceiving of that day, when,

coming face to face with her again, he saw the rosy tint in her cheek and the little delicate dimple sucked into it when she smiled, and the light footstep, and the grace of motion, and the swelling throat, and the heaving bosom and the quivering lids over the most glorious eyes that ever shone upon this earth! So, at least, it had seemed to him then, and still it seemed so as his ship sailed home.

At Smoky Point they lay off an hour or two to take in letters for the capital, and there intelligence had come aboard of the arrest, trial, and condemnation of Jason for his design and attempt upon the life of the President. Michael Sunlocks had been greatly startled and deeply moved by the news, and called on the master to weigh the anchor without more delay than was necessary, because he had now a double reason for wishing to be back in Reykjavik.

And being at length landed there he galloped up to Government House, bounded indoors with the thought of his soul speaking out of his eyes, and found Greeba there and every one of his sweetest visions realized. All his hundred tender, foolish, delicious names he called her over again, but with better ears to hear them, while he enfolded her in his arms, with both her own about his neck, and her beautiful head nestling close over his heart, and her fluttering breast against his breast.

"Dearest," he whispered, "my darling, love of my life, how ever could I leave you so long?"

"Michael," she whispered back, "if you say any more I shall be crying."

But the words were half smothered by sobs, for she was crying already. Seeing this, he sheered off on another tack, telling her of his mission in search of her father, and that if he had not brought the good man back, at least he had brought good news of him, and saying that they were both to start to-morrow for Thingvellir with the certainty of meeting him and bringing him home with great rejoicings.

"And now, my love, I have a world of things to attend to before I can go," said Michael Sunlocks, "and you have to prepare for two days in the saddle over the snow."

Greeba had been smiling through the big drops that floated in her eyes, but she grew solemn again, and said:

"Ah, Michael, you can not think what trouble we have all had while you have been away."

"I know it—I know it all," said Michael Sunlocks, "so say no more about it, but away to your room, my darling."

With that he rang a hand-bell that stood on the table, and Oscar, his servant, answered the call.

"Go across to the jail," he said, "and tell Jon that his prisoner is not to be removed until he has had orders from me."

"What prisoner, your Excellency?" said Oscar.

"The prisoner known as Jason," said Michael Sunlocks.

"He's gone, your Excellency," cried Oscar.

"Gone?"

"I mean to the Sulphur Mines, your Excellency."

"When was he sent?"

"Yesterday morning, at daybreak, your Excellency."

Michael Sunlocks sat at a table and wrote a few lines, and handed them to his man, saying: "Then take this to the Lagmann, and say I shall wait here until he comes."

While this was going forward Greeba had been standing by the door with a troubled look, and when Oscar was gone from the room she returned to her husband's side, and said, with great gravity, "Michael, what are you going to do with that man?"

But Michael Sunlocks only waved his hand, and said, "Nay, now, darling, you shall not trouble about this matter any more. It is my affair, and it is for me to see to it."

"But he has threatened your life," cried Greeba.

"Now, love, what did I say?" said Michael Sunlocks, with uplifted finger and a pretense at reproof. "You've fretted over this foolish thing too long; so think no more about it, and go to your room."

She turned to obey.

"And, darling," he cried in another voice, as she was slowly going, "that I may seem to have you with me all the same, just sing something, and I shall hear you while I work. Will you? There!" he cried, and laughed before she had time to answer. "See what a goose you have made of me!"

She came back, and for reply she kissed his forehead, and he put his lips to her lovely hand. Then, with a great lump in her throat, and the big drops rolling from her eyes to her cheeks, she left him to the work she sorely feared.

And being alone, and the candles lighted and the blinds drawn down, for night had now fallen in, he sat at the table to read the mass of letters that had gathered in his absence. There was no communication of any kind from the Government at Copenhagen, and satisfying himself on this point, and thinking for the fiftieth time that surely Denmark intended, as she ought, to leave the people of world-old Iceland to govern themselves, he turned with a sigh of relief to the strange, bewildering, humorous, pathetic hodgepodge of petitions, complaints, requests, demands, and threats that

came from every quarter of the island itself. And while he laughed and looked grave, and muttered, and made louder exclamations over these, as one by one they passed under his eye, suddenly the notes of a harpsichord, followed shortly by the sweeter notes of a sweet voice, came to him from another room, and with the tip of his pen to his lips, he dropped back in his chair to listen.

"My own song," he thought, and his eyelids quivered.

"Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine.
Oh, leave a kiss within the cup,
And I'll not ask for wine;
The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine;
But might I of Jove's nectar sup
I would not change for thine."

It was Greeba singing to him as he had bidden her.

"God bless her," he thought again in the silence that followed.

Ah, little did he think as he listened to her song that the eyes of the singer were wet, and that her heart was eating itself out with fears.

"What have I done to deserve such happiness?" he asked himself. But just as it happens that at the moment when our passionate joy becomes conscious of itself we find some dark misgivings creep over us of evil about to befall, so the bounding gladsomeness of Michael Sunlocks was followed by a chill dread that he tried to put aside and could not.

It was at that moment that the Lagmann entered the room. He was very tall and slight, and had a large head that drooped like daffodil. His dress was poor, he was short-sighted, growing elderly, and silent of manner. Nothing in his appearance or bearing would have suggested that he had any pride of his place as Judge of the island. He was a bookworm, a student, a scholar, and learned in the old sagas and eddas.

"Lagmann," said Michael Sunlocks, with simple deference. "I have sent for you on a subject of some moment to myself."

"Name it!" said the Judge.

"During my absence a man has been tried and condemned by the Bishop's court for threatening my life," said Michael Sunlocks.

"Jason, the son of Stephen Orry and Rachel, daughter of the late Governor-General Jorgensen," said the Judge.

"That is he, and I want you to give me an opinion respecting him," said Michael Sunlocks.

"Gladly," said the Judge.

"He was sent to the Sulphur Mines," said Michael Sunlocks.

"For six months, certain," said the Judge.

"Can we recall him, and have him tried afresh by the Court of the Quarter or the High Court of Justice?" said Michael Sunlocks.

"Too late for that," said the Judge. "A higher court, if it had condemned at all, might certainly have given him a longer punishment; but his sentence of six months is coupled with a condition that he shall hereafter take an oath of peace toward you. So have no fear of him."

"I have none at all," said Michael Sunlocks, "as my next question will show."

"What is it?" said the Judge.

"Can I pardon him?" said Michael Sunlocks.

For a moment the Lagmann was startled out of his placid manner, but recovering his composure he answered, "Yes, a President has sovereign powers of pardon."

"Then, Lagmann," said Michael Sunlocks, "will you see the needful papers drawn for my signature?"

"Surely," said the Judge. "But, first, will you pardon *me?*" he added, with a shadow of a smile.

"Say what you please, Lagmann," said Michael Sunlocks.

"It is possible that you do not yet know the nature of the evidence given at the trial," said the Judge.

"I think I do," said Michael Sunlocks.

"That this man claims to be your half-brother?"

"He *is* my brother."

"That he thinks you have stood in his place?"

"I *have* stood in his place."

That he is jealous of you, and in his madness has vowed to slay you?"

"His jealousy is natural, and his vow I do not dread."

The cold-mannered Lagmann paused a moment, wiped his short-sighted eyes with his red print handkerchief, and then said in a husky voice: "This is very noble of you. I'll go at once for the document."

He had only just gone from the room when Greeba returned to it. She had tried too long to conquer her agitation and could not, and now with wide eyes and a look of fear in them she hastened back to her husband the moment the Lagmann had left him.

"Michael," she cried, "what has the Lagmann gone for?"

"For a form of pardon," he answered.

"Pardon for that man?" she asked.

"Even so," he said, "and I have promised to sign it."

"Oh, Michael, my love—my dear, kind Michael!" she cried in

a pitiful voice of entreaty, "don't do it, don't, I pray of you—don't bring that man back."

"Why, Greeba, what is this?" said Michael Sunlocks. "What is it troubles my little woman?"

"Dear Michael," she cried once more, "for your own sake think again before you sign that pardon."

"Ah, I see," said he, "my darling has been all unstrung by this ugly business. Yes, and now I remember what they told me down at Smoky Point. It was my love herself that gave the poor lad up to justice. That was very brave of my darling; for her husband, bless her dear heart, was before all the world to her. Ah, yes, I know that all her love is mine, her love is first and last with her as with all warm natures. But she must not fear for me. No, she must not worry, but go back, like a dear soul, and leave this matter to me."

"Michael, my dear, noble Michael, I have something to say; will you not hear me?"

"No, no, no," he answered.

"Not for a moment? I have set my heart on telling you."

"Not for one little moment. But if you have set your heart on anything else, then, my darling, just think of it double, whatever it is, and it is yours already."

"But why may I not speak of this pardon?"

"Because, though I have never yet set eyes upon this poor man I know more about him than my darling can ever know, and because it is natural that her sweet little heart that is as brave as a lion for herself but as timid as a fawn for me, should exaggerate my peril. So now, no more words about it, but go, go."

She was about to obey when the maid came to say that dinner was ready. And then with a little shout of joy Michael Sunlocks threw down his papers, encircled his arm about Greeba's waist, and drew her along laughing, with her smiles fighting their way through her tears.

During the dinner he talked constantly of the dangers and trials and amusing mischances of his voyage, laughing at them all now that they were over, and laughing at Greeba, too, for the woful face with which she heard of them. And when they rose from the table he called on her for another song, and she sat at the harpsichord and sang, though something was swelling in her throat and often her heart was in her mouth. But he recked nothing of this, and only laughed when her sweet voice failed her, and filled up the breaks with his own rich tones.

In the midst of the singing the maid came in and said something

which Michael Sunlocks did not catch, for it was drowned to his ear by the gladsome uproar that he himself was making; but Greeba heard it and stopped playing, and presently the Lagmann entered the room.

"A good thing is no worse for being done betimes," said the Judge, "so here is the pardon ready to your hand for signature."

And with that he handed a paper to Michael Sunlocks, who said with cheer, "You're right, Lagmann, you're right; and my wife will give you a glass of wine while I write you my name."

"A cup of coffee, if you are taking it," said the Judge, with a bow to Greeba, who saw nothing of it, for her eyes were following her husband.

"Michael," she said, "I beseech you not to sign that paper. Only give way to me this once; I have never asked you before, and I will never ask you again. I am in earnest, Michael dear, and if you will not yield to me for your own sake, yield to me for mine."

"How is this? How grave we are!" said Michael Sunlocks, pausing with pen in hand.

"I know I have no right to meddle in such matters, but, dear Michael, don't sign that pardon—don't bring that man back. I beseech you, I beg of you."

"This is very strange," said Michael Sunlocks.

"It is also very simple," said the Judge, bringing his red handkerchief up to his dim eyes again.

"What!" said Michael Sunlocks. "Greeba, you do not know this man—this Jason?"

Greeba hesitated a moment, and glanced at the Lagmann.

"You don't know him?" repeated Michael Sunlocks.

She was sorely tempted, and she fell. "For my husband's sake," she thought, and then with a prayer for pardon she lifted her head and said falteringly, "No, no—why no, of course not."

Michael Sunlocks was satisfied. "'Why no, of course not,'" he echoed, laughing a little, and then he dipped his quill in the ink-horn.

"But I beseech you again, do not bring that man back," she cried.

There was a painful pause, and, to cover it, the Lagmann said: "Your husband is a brave-hearted man, who does not know the name of fear."

And then Michael Sunlocks said: "I will ask your pardon, Lagmann, while I step into the next room with my wife. I have something to tell her. Come, Greeba, come. I'll leave the document

with you for the present, Lagmann," he added over his shoulder as he passed out. Greeba walked beside him with downcast eyes, like a guilty thing condemned.

"Now, love," he said, when they were alone, "it is sweet and beautiful of you to think so much of me, but there is something that you do not know, and I ought to tell you. Maybe I hinted at it in my letter, but there has never been a chance to explain. Have you heard that this Jason is my brother?"

"Yes," said Greeba, faintly.

"It is true," said Michael Sunlocks. "And you know that when I first came to Iceland it was not to join the Latin school, but on an errand of mercy?"

"Yes," said Greeba.

"Well, the first of my duties was to find Jason's mother, and the next, was to find Jason himself."

"Jason!" cried Greeba.

"Yes, it was my father who sent me, for they had suffered much through his great fault, God forgive him! and I was to succor them in their distress. You know what followed?"

"Yes," said Greeba, softly.

"I came too late for the mother; the good woman was in her grave. I could not light upon her son, and lent an ear to the idle story that he was dead also. My search ceased, my zeal flagged, and, putting aside the solemn promise I made my father, I went on with my own affairs. But I never believed that he was dead, and I felt I should live to meet with him yet."

"Oh! oh!" cried Greeba.

"And many a time since my conscience has reproached me with a mission unfulfilled; and, awakening from many a dream of the hour and the place wherein I pledged my word to him that died trusting me, loving me, doting on me—heaven pity him, bad man though he was—as never a son was loved by a father before, it has not appeased me to say to myself, 'Michael, while you are here, given up to your ambitions, he is there amid the perils and hardships of the sea, and he is your brother, and the only kinsman left to you in the wide world.'"

Greeba was sobbing by this time

"And now, my darling, you know all, and why I wish to sign this pardon. Could I ever know a moment's happiness with my brother slaving like a beast at yonder mines! What if he is jealous of me, and if his jealousy had driven him to madness! There is a sense in which he is right. But, whether right or wrong, mad or sane, he shall not be punished for my sake. So, dearest

love, my darling, dry your beautiful eyes, and let me ease my conscience the only way I may, for I have no fear, and my wife must have none."

"Sunlocks," said Greeba, "you have made me ashamed. I am no fit wife for a man like you. I am too little-hearted. Oh, why did I ever come? Why? Why?" And she wept as if her heart would break. He comforted her with tender protests, enfolding her in his arms and caressing her lovely head.

"Tell me," he whispered, "nay, there, hide your face in my breast. There, there, tell me now—tell me all."

"Sunlocks," she said, drawing back, "I have lied to you."

"Lied?"

"When I told you I had not known Jason I told you what was false."

"Then you have known him?"

"Yes, I knew him in the Isle of Man."

"The Isle of Man?"

"He lived there nearly five years."

"All the time he was away?"

"Yes, he landed the night you sailed. You crossed him on the sea."

"Greeba, why did he go there? Yet how should you know?"

"I do know, Michael—it was to fulfil his vow—his vow that the old priest spoke of in court—his wicked vow of vengeance."

"On my father?"

"On your father and on you."

"God in heaven!" cried Michael Sunlocks, with great awe. "And that very night my father was saved from his own son by death."

"It was he who saved your father from the sea."

"Wait," said Michael Sunlocks; "did you know of this vow before you accused him of an attempt upon me?"

Greeba caught her breath, and answered, "Yes."

"Did you know of it while you were still in the Isle of Man?"

"Yes," she answered again, more faintly.

"Did he tell you?"

"Yes, and he bound me by a promise never to speak of it, but I could not keep it from my own husband."

"That's strange," said Michael Sunlocks, with a look of pain. "To share a secret like that with you was very strange," he added.

Greeba was flurried, and said again, too bewildered to see which way her words were tending. "And he gave me his promise in return to put aside his sinful purpose."

"That's still stranger," said Michael Sunlocks. "Greeba," he added, in another tone, "why should you say you did not know Jason?"

"Because the Lagmann was with us."

"But why, my girl? Why?"

"Lest evil rumors might dishonor my husband."

"But where was the dishonor to me in my wife knowing this poor lad, Greeba?"

At that she hesitated a moment, and then in a tone of gentle reproof she said, nestling close to him and caressing his sleeve, "Michael, why do you ask such questions?"

But he did not turn aside for that, but looked searchingly into her face, and said: "He was nothing to you, was he?"

She hesitated again, and then tried to laugh, "Why, what should he be to me?" she said.

He did not flinch, but repeated, "He was nothing to you then?"

"Nobody save my husband has ever been anything to me," she said, with a caress.

"He was nothing to you—no?"

"No," she answered, throwing back her head.

Just then the English maid came to say that the six big Englishmen who had been there before were in the kitchen again, and asking to see her master, not her mistress, this time. In an instant Greeba's little burst of disdain was spent, and she was all humility and entreaty.

"Don't go to them," she cried. "Don't listen to them."

"Who are they?" he asked.

"My brothers. I have not had time to tell you, but I will tell you now."

She put her arms about his neck as if to hold him.

"What have they come for?"

"To tell you some falsehood, and so revenge themselves on me. I know it, I feel it. Ah, a woman's instinct is sure. But, dear Michael, you will not receive them. Refuse, and I will tell you such a story. And you will laugh—"

"Let me go, Greeba," he said, loosening the grip of her tightening arms, and the next moment he was gone from the room. Then all the spirit of the woman arose in Greeba, and, throwing aside her vague fears, she resolved, as only a woman could, in the cruel hour when a dear heart seemed to be slipping away from her, that, come what would, she should hold to her husband at all hazards, and that whatever her brothers might say against her, let it be true or false, if it threatened to separate her from him, she must deny it.

What matter about the truth? Her love was before everything. And who was to disprove her word? Jason alone could do so, and his tongue was sealed forever in a silence as deep as the grave's.

Michael Sunlocks went out of the room like a man in a dream: an ugly dream, a dream of darkening terrors undefined. He came back to it like one who has awakened to find that his dream has come true. Within an hour his face seemed to have grown old. He stooped, he stumbled on the floor, his limbs shook under him, he was a broken and sorrowful man. At sight of him Greeba could scarcely restrain an impulse to scream. She ran to him, and cried, "Michael, husband, what have they told you?"

At first he looked stupidly into her quivering face, and then glancing down at a paper he held in one hand he made an effort to conceal it behind him. She was too quick for him, and cried, "What is it? Show it me."

"It's nothing," he said; "nothing, love, nothing—"

"What have they told you?" she said again, "tell me—tell me."

"They say that you loved Jason," he answered with a great effort.

"It's a lie," she cried stoutly.

"They say that you were to marry him."

She tried to answer as stoutly as before, "And that's a lie, too," but the words stuck in her throat.

"Oh! God," he cried, and turned away from her.

There was a stove in the room, and he stepped up to it, opened the iron door, and thrust the paper into the crackling fire.

"What is that you are burning?" she cried. And in another moment, before he knew what she was doing, she had run to the stove, pulled back with her bare hands the hot door that he was closing with the tongs, thrust her arm into the fire, and brought out the paper. It was in flames, and she rolled it in her palms until little but its charred remains lay in her scorched fingers. But she saw what it had been—her own abandoned letter to Red Jason. Then, slowly looking up, she turned back to her husband, pale, a fearful chill creeping over her, and he had thrown himself down on a chair by the table and hidden his face in his arms.

It was a pitiful and moving sight. To see that man, so full of hope and love and simple happy trust a little hour ago, lie there with bent head and buried eyes, and hands clasped together convulsively, because the idol he had set up for himself lay broken before him, because the love wherein he lived lay dead; and to see that woman, so beautiful, and in heart so true, though dogged by

the malice of evil chance, though weak as a true woman may be, stand over him with whitening lips and not a word to utter—to see this was to say, "What devil of hell weaves the web of circumstance in this world of God?"

Then, with a cry of love and pain in one, she flung herself on her knees beside him, and enfolded him in her arms. "Michael," she said, "my love, my darling, my dear kind husband, forgive me, and let me confess everything. It is true that I was to have married Jason, but it is not true that I loved him. I esteemed him, for he is of a manly, noble soul, and after the departure of my father and the death of my mother, and amid the cruelties of my brothers and your own long, long silence, I thought to reward him for his great fidelity. But I loved you, you only, only you, dear Michael, and when your letter reached me at last I asked him to release me that I might come to you, and he did so, and I came. This is the truth, dear Michael, as sure as we shall meet before God some day."

Michael Sunlocks lifted his face and said, "Why did you not tell me this long ago, Greeba, and not now when it is dragged from you?"

She did not answer him, for to be met with such a question after a plea so abject, stung her to the quick. "Do you not believe I've told you the truth?" she asked.

"God knows; I know not what to believe," he answered.

"Do you rather trust my brothers, who have deceived you?" she said.

"So, Heaven help me! has my wife, whom I have loved so dear."

At that she drew herself up. "Michael," she said, "what lie have these men told you? Don't keep it from me. What have I done?"

"Married me, while loving him," he answered. "That's enough for me, God pity me!"

"Do you believe that?" she said.

"Your concealments, your deceptions, your subterfuges all prove it," he said. "Oh, it is killing me, for it is the truth."

"So you believe that?" she said.

"If I had not written you would now be Jason's wife," he said. "And by this light I see his imprisonment. It was you who accused him of a design upon my life. Why? Because you knew what he had confessed to you. For your own ends you used his oath against him, knowing he could not deny it. And what was your purpose? To put him away. Why? Because he was pursuing you for deserting him. But you made his vow your excuse,

and the brave lad said nothing. No, not a word; and yet he might have dishonored you before them all. And when I wished to sign his pardon you tried to prevent me. Was that for my sake? No, but yours. Was it my life you thought to protect? No, but your own secret."

Thus, in the agony of his tortured heart, the hot hard words came from him in a torrent, but before the flood of them was spent, Greeba stepped up to him with flashing eyes, and all the wrath in her heart that comes of outraged love, and cried:

"It is false. It is false, I say. Send for him and he himself will deny it. I can trust him, for he is of a noble soul. Yes, he is a man indeed. I challenge you to send for him. Let him come here. Bring him before me, and he shall judge between us."

"No," said Michael Sunlocks, "I will not send for him. For what *you* have done *he* shall suffer."

Then there came a knock at the door, and after a pause the Lagmann entered, with his stoop and uncertain glance. "Excuse me," he said, "will you sign the pardon now, or leave it until the morning?"

"I will not sign it at all," said Michael Sunlocks. But at the next moment he cried: "Wait! after all it is not the man's fault, and he shall not suffer." With that he took the paper out of the law-man's hand and signed it hurriedly. "Here," he said, "see that the man is set free immediately."

The Lagmann looked at both of them out of his near-sighted eyes, coughed slightly, and left the room without a word more.

CHAPTER XII

THE PRESIDENT OR THE MAN

I

When the Fairbrothers left Government House after their dirty work was done, Jacob was well content with himself, but his brothers were still grumbling.

"He didn't seem anyways keen to believe it," Thurstan muttered.

"Leave him alone for that," said Jacob. "Did ye see when I gave him the letter?"

"Shoo! I wouldn't trust but she will persuade him she never writ it," said Thurstan.

"He's got it anyways, and we have nothing to show for it," said Stean.

"And noways powerful grateful either. And where's the fortune that was coming straight to our hand?" said Ross.

"Chut, man, there's nothing for us in his mighty schame," said Thurstan.

"I always said so," said Asher; "and five-and-thirty pounds of good money thrown into the sea."

"Go on," said Jacob, with a lofty smile, "go on, don't save your breath for your porridge," and he trudged along ahead of his brethren. Presently he stopped, faced about to them, and said, "Boys, you're mighty sure that nothing is coming of this mighty schame," with a look of high disdain at Thurstan.

"Sure as death and the taxman," sneered Thurstan.

"Then there's a boat sailing for Dublin at high water, and I'll give five-and-thirty pounds apiece to every man of you that likes to go home with her."

At that there was an uneasy scraping of five pairs of feet, and much humming and hawing and snuffling.

"Quick, which of you is it to be? Speak out, and don't all speak at once," said Jacob.

Then Asher, with a look of outraged reason, said, "What! and all our time go for nothing, and the land lying fallow for months, and the winter cabbage not down, and the men's wages going on?"

"You won't take it?" said Jacob.

"A paltry five-and-thirty, why, no," said Asher.

"Then let's have no more of your badgering," said Jacob.

"But, Jacob, tell us where's our account in all this jeel with the girl and the Governor," said Gentleman John.

"Find it out," said Jacob, with a flip of finger and thumb, as he strode on again before his brothers.

"Aw, lave him alone," said Stean. "He's got his schame."

II

Next morning before the light was yet good, and while the warm vapor was still rising into the chill air from the waters of the fiord, Michael Sunlocks sat at work in the room that served him for office and study. His cheeks were pale, his eyes were heavy, and his whole countenance was haggard. But there was a quiet strength in his slow glance and languid step that seemed to say that in spite of the tired look of age about his young face

and lissom figure he was a man of immense energy, power of mind and purpose.

His man Oscar was bustling in and out of the room on many errands. Oscar was a curly-headed youth of twenty, with a happy upward turn of the corners of the mouth, and little twinkling eyes full of a bright fire.

The lad knew that there was something amiss with his master by some queer twist of nature that gave a fillip to his natural cheerfulness.

Michael Sunlocks would send Oscar across the arg to the house of the Speaker, and at the next moment forget that he had done so, touch the bell, walk over to the stove, stir the fire, and when the door opened behind him deliver his order a second time without turning round. It would be the maid who had answered the bell, and she would say, "If you please, your Excellency, Oscar has gone out. You sent him across to the Speaker." And then Michael Sunlocks would bethink himself and say, "True, true; you are quite right."

He would write his letters twice, and sometimes fold them without sealing them; he would read a letter again and again and not grasp its contents. His coffee and toast that had been brought in on a tray lay untouched until both were cold, though they had been set to stand on the top of the stove. He would drop his pen to look vacantly out at the window, and cross the room without an object, and stand abruptly and seem to listen.

The twinkling eyes of young Oscar saw something of this, and when the little English maid stopped the lad in the long passage and questioned him of his master's doings, he said with a mighty knowing smirk that the President was showing no more sense and feeling and gumption that morning than a tortoise within its shell.

Toward noon the Fairbrothers asked for Michael Sunlocks, and were shown into his room. They entered with many bows and scrapes, and much stroking of their forelocks. Michael Sunlocks received them gravely, with an inclination of the head, but no words.

"We make so bold as to come to see you again," said Jacob, "for we've got lands lying fallow—the lot of us, bar myself, maybe—and we must be getting back and putting a sight on them."

Michael Sunlocks bowed slightly.

"We've lost a good crop by coming," said Jacob, "and made no charge neither, though it's small thanks you get in this world for doing what's fair and honest."

"Well?" said Michael Sunlocks.

"She never was good to them that was good to her," said Jacob, "and we're taking sorrow to see that we're not the only ones that suffer from her ingratitude."

"Not another word on that head," said Michael Sunlocks. "What do you want?"

"Want? Well, it isn't so mortal kind to say *want*," said Jacob, with the look of one whose self-respect had been wounded.

"A man may be poor, but a poor man has got feelings," said Asher.

"Poor or rich, I say again, 'What do you want?' " said Michael Sunlocks.

"Only to say that we're going to keep this little thing quiet," said Jacob.

"Aw," quiet, quiet," said the others.

"I must leave that to you," said Michael Sunlocks.

"Aw, and safe, too," said Jacob, "for what for should we be going disgracing our own sister? It isn't natural, and her the wife of the President, too."

"Aw, no, no," said the brethren.

"He won't hear a word against her for all," whispered John to Jacob.

"A girl may be a bit wild, and doing sweethearting before she was married," said Jacob, "but that is no reason why all the world should be agate of her, poor thing; and what's the saying, 'The first slip is always forgotten?' "

"Silence," said Michael Sunlocks, sternly. "If this is what you have come to say, we can cut this meeting short."

"Lord-a-massy," cried Asher. "Is he for showing us the door, too?"

"Who says so?" said Jacob, changing his tone. Then facing about to Michael Sunlocks, he said, "It wouldn't do to be known that the President of Iceland had married a bad woman—would it?"

Michael Sunlocks did not reply, and Jacob answered himself: "No, of course not. So perhaps you'll give me back that letter I lent you yesterday."

"I haven't got it. It is destroyed," said Michael Sunlocks.

"Destroyed!" cried Jacob.

"Make yourself easy about it," said Michael Sunlocks. "It will do no more mischief. It's burned. I burned it myself."

"Burned it?" Jacob exclaimed. "Why, do you know, I set great store by that letter? I wouldn't have lost it for a matter of five hundred pounds."

Michael Sunlocks could bear no more. In an instant the weary

look had gone from his face. His eyes flashed with anger; he straightened himself up, and brought his fist down on the table. "Come," he cried, "let us have done with this fencing. You want me to pay you five hundred pounds. Is that it?"

"For the letter—that's it," said Jacob.

"And if I refuse to do so you mean to publish it abroad that I have married a wicked woman?"

"Aw, when did we say so?" said Jacob.

"No matter what you say. You want five hundred pounds?"

"For the letter."

"Answer. You want five hundred pounds?"

"For the letter."

"Then you shall not have one sixpence. Do you think I would pay you for a thing like that? Listen to me. I would give you all the wealth of the world, if I had it, never to have heard your evil news."

"That won't pass, master," said Jacob. "It's easy said now the letter's gone, and no danger left. But five hundred pounds I'll have or I'll not leave Iceland till Iceland knows something more than she knows to-day."

"Say what you like, do what you like," cried Michael Sunlocks; "but if ever you set foot in this house again, I'll clap every man of you in jail for blackmailing."

III

Out again in the chilly dusky air, with the hard snow under foot, the Fairbrothers trudged along. Jacob gloomed as dark as any pitch, and Thurstan's red eyes, like fire of ice, probed him with a burning delight.

"I always said so," Asher whimpered; and then over Jacob's stooping shoulder he whispered, "I'll take half of what you offered me, and leave you to it."

Hearing that Thurstan laughed fiercely, and repeated his hot christenings of two days before—"Numskull! tomfool! blatherskite!" and yet choicer names beside. Jacob bore all and showed no rancor, but tramped along ahead of the others, crestfallen, crushed, and dumb. And, left to themselves for conversation and comfort, his brethren behind compared notes together.

"Strange! He doesn't seem to care what is thought of his wife," said John.

"Aw, what's disgrace to a craythur same as that? Like mother like son," said Ross.

"She had better have married the other one," said Asher, "and I always said so."

"It's self, self, self, with a man like yonder," said Stean.

"Curse him for a selfish brute," said John.

"Aw, an unfeeling monster," said Ross.

And with such heat of anger these generous souls relieved themselves on the name of Michael Sunlocks.

"Boys," said Thurstan, "maybe he has no feeling for the girl, but I'll go bail he has some for himself, and I wouldn't trust but he'd be feeling it mortal keen if he was after getting pulled down from his berth."

"What d'ye mean?" asked all four at once.

"Leave that to myself," said Thurstan, "and maybe since I set foot ashore I've heard tell of schames that's going."

IV

Greeba sat in her room, trying to cheat time of its weary hours by virtue of much questioning of her little English maid, who from time to time brought news of Michael Sunlocks. He had risen very early, as early as mid-morning (six o'clock), and ever since then he had been writing in his office. Oscar had been running here and there for him, first to the Senate, then to the Speaker's, and then to the Bishop's. The tall doorkeeper, stammering Jon, had seen him, being sent for, and the feckless busybody had told him ever such needless stories of the jellies and the soups and the mistress's visit to the poor man in the prison, and however people got wind of things was just puzzling beyond words.

With such cackle and poor company Greeba passed her time, thinking no ill of the pert little maid who dressed up her hair and dressed down her pride as well, for a woman will have any confidant rather than none, and the sweetest and best of women, being estranged from her husband, her true stay and support, will lay hold of the very sorriest staff to lean on. And the strange twist of little natures, that made Oscar perky while his master was melancholy, made the maid jubilant while her mistress wept. She was a dark-haired mite with eyes of the shallow brightness of burnished steel. Her name was Elizabeth. She meant no harm to any one.

Toward noon the little woman burst into the room with great eagerness, and cried, in a hushed whisper, "The Speaker has come. I am sure that something is going to happen; Oscar says so, too. What is it? What can it be?"

Greeba listened, and carried herself bravely while the maid was near, but when the door had closed upon the chatterer she leaned against the window and cried, hearing nothing but her own weeping and the grief of the half-frozen river that flowed beneath. Then, drying her eyes and summoning what remained of her pride, she left her own room to go to the room of her husband.

V

In his little silk skull-cap and spectacles the Lagmann came back, for he was Judge and Speaker in one, and found Michael Sunlocks alone. At a glance he saw that the trouble of the night before had deepened, and that something of great moment was afoot.

"Lagmann," said Michael Sunlocks, "I wish you to summon both Chambers to meet at the Senate House to-morrow night."

"It will be inconvenient," said the Speaker, "for the Committee of the Althing has risen, and the members are preparing to go back home."

"That is why I wish them to be summoned at once," said Michael Sunlocks.

"Is the matter of such pressing importance?" asked the Speaker.

"It is; and it admits of no delay," answered Michael Sunlocks.

"May I mention its purport?" said the Speaker.

"Say only that the President has a message for the Althing," said Michael Sunlocks.

"At what hour to-morrow night?" asked the Speaker.

"At mid-evening," answered Michael Sunlocks, and then, with the sigh of a weary man, he turned toward the stove.

The Speaker glanced at him with his dim eyes screwed up, pushed back his little skull-cap, and ran his forefinger along his bald crown, then shook his head gravely and left the room, saying within himself, "Why this haste? And why the message? Ah, these impetuous souls that rise so high and so fast sometimes go down headlong to the abyss!"

VI

Michael Sunlocks was turning round from the stove when Greeba entered, and for all the womanly courage with which she tried to carry herself before him, he could see that she looked frightened, and that her eyes sought his eyes for mercy and cheer.

"Michael," she cried, "what is it that you are about to do? Tell me. I can not bear this suspense any longer."

He made her no answer, but sat at his desk and lifted his pen. At that she stamped her foot and cried again:

"Tell me, tell me. I can not and I will not bear it."

But he knew, without lifting his head, that with all her brave challenge, and the spark of her defiant eyes, behind her dark lashes a great tear-drop lay somewhere veiled. So he showed no anger, and neither did he reply to her appeal, but made some show of going on with his writing.

And being now so far recovered from her first fear as to look upon his face with eyes that could see it, Greeba realized all that she had but partly guessed from the chatter of her maid, of the sad havoc the night had made with him. At that she could bear up no longer, for before her warm woman's feeling all her little stubborn spirit went down as with a flood, and she flung herself at his feet and cried, "Michael, forgive me; I don't know what I am saying."

But getting no answer to her passionate agony any more than her hot disdain, her pride got the better of her again, and she tried to defend herself with many a simple plea, saying between a sob and a burst of wrath that if she had deceived him, and said what was barely true, it was only from thinking to defend his happiness.

"And why," she cried, "why should I marry you while loving him?"

Then, for the first time, he raised his head and answered her:

"Because of your pride, Greeba—your fatal pride," he said; "your pride that has been your bane since you were a child and you went to London and came back the prouder of your time there. I thought it was gone; but the old leaven works as potently as before, and rises up to choke me. I ought to have known it, Greeba, that your old lightness would lead you to some false dealing yet, and I have none but myself to blame."

Now if he had said this with any heat of anger, or with any rush of tears, she would have known by the sure instinct of womanhood that he loved her still, and was only fighting against love in vain. Then she would have flung herself into his arms with a burst of joy and a cry of "My darling, you are mine, you are mine." But instead of that he spoke the hard words calmly, coldly, and without so much as a sigh, and by that she knew that the heart of his love had been killed within him, and now lay dead before her. So, stung to the quick, she said, "You mean that I deserted Jason because he was poor, and came here to you because you are rich. It is false—cruelly, basely false. You know it is false; or, if you don't, you ought."

"I am far from rich, Greeba," he said, "although to your pride I may seem so, seeing that he whom you left for the sake of the poor glory of my place here was but a friendless sailor lad."

"I tell you it is false," she cried. "I could have loved my husband if he had never had a roof over his head. And yet you tell me that? You that should know me so well! How dare you?" she cried, and by the sudden impulse of her agony, with love struggling against anger, and fire and tears in her eyes together, she lifted up her hand and struck him on the breast.

That blow did more than any tearful plea to melt the icy mistrust that had all night been freezing up his heart, but before he had time to reply Greeba was on her knees before him, praying of him to forgive her, because she did not know what she was doing.

"But, Michael," she said again, "it isn't true. Indeed, indeed, it is not, and it is very, very cruel. Yes, I am proud, very proud, but I am proudest of all of my husband. Proud of him, proud for him—proud that he should be the bravest and noblest gentleman in the world. That is the worst of my pride, Michael—that I want to be proud of him I love. But if that might not have been, and he had been the lowliest man on earth, I could have shared his lot though it had been never so poor and humble, so that I could have had him beside me always."

As he listened to her passionate words there was a fluttering at his throat. "Are you sure of that, Greeba?" he said.

"Only let me prove it to you," she cried, with the challenge of beauty in her beautiful eyes.

"So you shall, Greeba," he said, "for we leave this house to-morrow."

"What?" she cried, rising to her feet.

"Yes," he said, "from to-morrow our condition will be different. So get yourself ready to go away from here."

Then her courageous challenge sank away in an instant.

"Whatever do you mean?" she cried, in great terror.

"If you have married the President you shall live with the man," he answered.

"Oh, Michael, Michael, what are you going to do?" she cried. "To degrade yourself?"

"Even so," he said calmly.

"To punish me?" she cried. "To prove me? To test me?"

"If you can go through with it I shall be happy and content," he answered.

"Are you then to be nothing in Iceland?" she said.

"And what of that?" he asked. "Think of what you have just been saying."

"Then I have come into your life to wreck it," she cried. "Yes, I, I! Michael," she added, more quietly, "I will go away. I would not bring shame and humiliation upon you for all that the world can give. I will leave you."

"That you never shall," said Michael Sunlocks. "We are man and wife now, and as man and wife we shall live together."

"I tell you I will not stay," she cried.

"And I tell you," he replied, "that I am your husband, and you shall give me a wife's obedience."

"Michael, dear Michael," she said, "it is for your own good that I want to leave you, so that the great promise of your life may not be wasted. It is I who am breaking in upon it. And I am nothing. Let me go."

"It is too late, Greeba. As poor man and poor woman we must pass the rest of our life together."

At that she burst into sobs again, blaming her brothers, and telling of their mean mission, and how she resented it, and what revenge of wicked slander they had wreaked upon her.

"You see it is all an error," she cried: "a cruel, cruel error."

"No, Greeba, it is not all an error," he answered. It is not an error that you deceived me—and lied to me."

At that word her tears fell back, and the fire of her heart was in her eyes in an instant. "You say that, do you?" she cried. "Ah, then, perhaps there has been yet another error than you think of —the error of throwing him away for sake of you. He is noble, and simple, and true. His brave heart is above all suspicion. God pity him, and forgive me!"

Then for the first time that day since the six Fairbrothers had left the house, the calmness of Michael Sunlocks forsook him, and in a stern voice, with a look of fierce passion in his face, he cried, "Let me never, never meet that man. Five years ago I came here to save him, but now if we ever come face to face it will be the hour of his death or mine."

CHAPTER XIII

THE FALL OF MICHAEL SUNLOCKS

When the Fairbrothers, in the first days after their coming to Iceland, started inquiries touching the position and influence of Michael Sunlocks, thinking thereby to make sure of their birds in the bush before parting with their bird in the hand, they frequented a little drinking-shop in the Cheapstead where sailors of many nations congregated, Danes, Icelanders, Norwegians, English, and Irish. Hearing there what satisfied their expectations, their pride began to swell, and as often as Michael Sunlocks was named with honor they blew up their breasts like bantams and said he was their brother, so to speak, and had been brought up in the same house with them since he was a slip of a brat of two or three. And if any who heard them glanced them over with doubtful eyes they straightway broke into facetious stories concerning the boyhood of Sunlocks, showing all their wondrous kindness to him as big brothers toward a little one.

Now these trifling events were of grave consequence to the fortunes of the Fairbrothers, and the fate of Michael Sunlocks, at two great moments. The first of the two was when Thurstan broke into open rebellion against Jacob. Then, with a sense of his wise brother's pitiable blunder-headedness, the astute Thurstan went off to the same drinking-shop to console himself with drink, and there he was addressed, when he was well and comfortably drunk, by a plausible person who spoke an unknown tongue. The end of that conference was nevertheless an idea firmly settled in Thurstan's mind that if he could not get money out of Michael Sunlocks he could at least get satisfaction.

This was the matter that Thurstan darkly hinted at when Jacob, being utterly discomfited, had to leave all further schemes to his brethren. So that day he returned to his rendezvous, met the plausible person again, and later in the evening sought out his brothers and said, "Didn't I tell ye to leave it to me?"

"What's going doing?" said four voices at once.

"Plucking him down, the upstart, that's what's going doing," said Thurstan.

Then to five pairs of eager ears it slowly leaked out that a Danish ship lay in the harbor with a mysterious cargo of great casks, supposed to contain tallow; that after discharging their contents these casks were to be filled with shark's oil; that waiting the time to fill them they were to be stored (as all other warehouses were full of bonder's stock) in the little cell of detention under the senate-house; and, finally and most opportunely, that a meeting of the Althing had been summoned on special business for the next night following, and that Michael Sunlocks was to be present.

The Fairbrothers heard all this with eyes that showed how well they understood it and keenly gloated over it. And late the same night the cargo of great casks was unshipped at the jetty, wheeled up to the senate-house and lodged there, carefully, silently, one by one. Thurstan helping, a few stragglers looking on, the stammering doorkeeper, long Jon, not anywhere visible, and no one else in the little sleepy town a whit the wiser. This being done, Thurstan went back to his lodging with the content of a soul at ease, saying to himself, "As I say, if we don't get anything else, we'll get satisfaction; and if we get what's promised I've a safe place to put it until the trouble's over and we can clear away, and that's the little crib under the turret of the cathedral church."

Then the worthy man lay down to sleep.

Before Thurstan was awake next morning Reykjavik was all astir. It had become known that a special sitting of the Althing had been summoned for that night, and because nothing was known much was said concerning the business afoot. People gathered in groups where the snow of the heavy drifts had been banked up at the street corners, and gossiped and guessed. Such little work as the great winter left to any man was done in haste or not at all, that men might meet in the stores, the drinking-shops, and on the Cheapstead and ask, "Why?" "Wherefore?" and "What does it mean?" That some event of great moment was pending seemed to be the common opinion everywhere, though what ground it rested on no one knew, for no one knew anything. Only on one point was the feeling more general, or nearer right; that the President himself was at the root and centre of whatever was coming.

Before nightfall this vague sentiment, which ever hovers, like a dark cloud over a nation when a storm is near to breaking upon it, had filled every house in the capital, so that when the hour was come for the gathering of the Althing the streets were thronged. Tow-headed children in goat-skin caps ran here and there, women stood at the doors of houses, young girls leaned out of windows in

spite of the cold, sailors and fishermen with pipes between their lips and their hands deep in their pockets lounged in grave silence outside the taverns, and old men stood under the open lamps by the street corners and chewed and snuffed to keep themselves warm.

In the neighborhood of the wooden senate-house on the High Street the throng was densest, and such of the members as came afoot had to crush their way to the door. All the space within that had been allotted to the public was filled as soon as stammering Jon opened the side door. When no more room was left the side door was closed again and locked, and it was afterward remembered, when people had time to put their heads together, that long Jon was there and then seen to pass the key of this side door to one of the six English strangers who had lately come to the town. That stranger was Thurstan Fairbrother.

The time of waiting before the proceedings commenced was passed by those within the senate-house in snuff-taking and sneezing and coughing, and a low buzz of conversation, full of solemn conjecture.

The members came in twos and threes, and every fresh comer was quizzed for a hint of the secret of the night. But grave and silent, when taken together, with the gravity and solemnity of so many oxen, and some of the oxen's sullen stupidity, were the faces both of members and spectators. Yet among both were faces that told of amused unbelief, calculating spirits that seemed to say that all this excitement was a bubble and would presently burst like one; sapient souls who, when the world is dead, will believe in no judgment until they hear the last trump.

There were two parties in the Senate—the Church party, that wanted religion to be the basis of the reformed government; and the Levelers, who wished the distinctions of clergy and laity to be abolished so far as secular power could go. The Church party was led by the Bishop, who was a member of the higher chamber, the Council, by virtue of his office; the Levelers were led by the little man with piercing eyes and the square brush of iron-gray hair who had acted as spokesman to the Court at the trial of Red Jason. As each of these arrived there was a faint commotion through the house.

Presently the Speaker came shuffling in, wiping his brow with his red handkerchief, and at the same moment the thud of a horse's hoofs on the hard snow outside, followed by a deep buzz as of many voices—not cheering nor yet groaning—told of the coming of the President.

Then, amid suppressed excitement, Michael Sunlocks entered

the house, looking weary, pale, much older, and stooping slightly under his flaxen hair, as if conscious of the gaze of many eyes fixed steadfastly upon him.

After the Speaker had taken his chair, Michael Sunlocks rose in his place amid dead stillness.

"Sir, and gentlemen," he said in a tense voice, speaking slowly, calmly, and well, "you are met here at my instance to receive a message of some gravity. It is scarcely more than half a year since it was declared and enacted by this present Council of the Althing that the people of Iceland were and should be constituted, established and confirmed to be a Republic or Free State, governed by the Supreme Authority of the Nation, the people's representatives. You were then pleased to do me the honor of electing me to be your first President, and though I well knew that no man had less cause to put himself forward in the cause of his country than I, being the youngest among you, the least experienced, and, by birth, an Englishman, yet I undertook the place I am now in because I had taken a chief hand in pulling down the old order, and ought, therefore, to lend the best help I could toward putting up the new. Other reasons influenced me, such as the desire to keep the nation from falling amid many internal dissensions into extreme disorder and becoming open to the common enemy. I will not say that I had no personal motives, no private aims, no selfish ambitions in stepping in where your confidence opened the way, but you will bear me witness that in the employment to which the nation called me, though there may have been passion and mistakes, I have endeavored to discharge the duty of an honest man."

There was a low murmur of assent, then a pause, then a hush, and then Michael Sunlocks continued:

"But, gentlemen, I have come to see that I am not able for such a trust as the burden of this government, and I now beg to be dismissed of my charge."

Then the silence was broken by many exclamations of surprise. They fell on the ear of Michael Sunolcks like the ground-swell of a distant sea. His white face quivered, but his eyes were bright, and he did not flinch.

"It is no doubt your concernment to know what events and what convictions have so suddenly influenced me, and I can only claim your indulgence in withholding that part of both that touches the interests of others. For myself, I can but say that I have made mistakes and lost self-confidence; that being unable to manage my own affairs I am unwilling to undertake the affairs of the nation; that I am convinced I am unfit for the great place I hold;

that any name were fitter than mine for my post, any person fitter than I am for its work; and I say this from my heart, God knows."

He was listened to in silence, but amid a tumult of unheard emotion, and as he went on his voice, though still low, was so charged with suppressed feeling that it seemed in that dead stillness to rise to a cry.

"Gentlemen," he said, "though this may come on you with surprise, do not think it has been lightly resolved upon, or that it is to me a little thing to renounce the honor with the burden of government; I will deal plainly and faithfully with you and say that all my heart was in the work you gave me, and though I held my life in my hand, I was willing to adventure it in that high place where the judgment of the Althing placed me. So if I beg of you to release me I sacrifice more by my resignation than you by your dismissal. If I had pride, Heaven has humbled it, and that is a righteous judgment of God. Young and once hopeful, I am withdrawing from all sight of hope. I am giving up my cherished ambitions and the chances of success. When I leave this place you will see me no more. I am to be as nothing henceforward, for the pole-star of my life is gone out. So not without feeling, not without pain, I ask you to dismiss me and let me go my ways."

He sat down upon these words amid the stunned stupefaction of those who heard him, and when he had ceased to speak it seemed as if he were still speaking. Presently the people recovered their breath and there was the harsh grating of feet, and a murmur like a low sough of wind.

Then rose the little man with the brush hair, the leader of the Levelers, and the chief opponent of Michael Sunlocks in the Presidency. His name was Grimmsson. Clearing his throat, raspily, he began to speak in short, jerky sentences. This was indeed a surprise that moved the house to great astonishment. There was a suspicion of mock heroics about it that he, for his part, could not shake off, for they all knew the President for a dreamer of dreams. The President had said that it was within the concernment of the Althing to know how it stood that he had so suddenly and surprisingly become convinced of his unfitness. Truly he was right there. Also the President had said that he had undertaken his post not so much out of hope of doing any good as out of a desire to prevent mischief and evil. Yet what was he now doing? Running them headlong into confusion and disorder.

The leader of the Levelers sat down, and a dark-browed fellow from among his followers rose in his place. What did this hubbub mean? If the President had been crazy in his health they

might have understood it; but the Lord was pleased to preserve him. Perhaps they had to look deeper. Whispers were abroad among some who had been near to the President's person that the time had come to settle the order and prosperity of Iceland on a new basis. He made no doubt such whispers implied a Protectorate, perhaps even a Monarchy. Did the President think to hasten the crisis that would lead to that change? Did he hope to alter the name of President for Protector, or for something yet higher? Was he throwing his sprat to catch a mackerel? Let them look to it.

The dark-browed man sat down, with a grin of triumph, and his place was taken by a pert little beardless person, with a smirk on his face. They had all read the parable of how a certain man made a feast, and did his friends the honor to invite them; but first one friend for one halting reason, and then another for a reason yet more lame, excused himself from sitting at the good man's table. Well, one of these excuses was from a man who had married a wife, and therefore could not come. Now the President had married a wife—

The little man got no further, for Michael Sunlocks, whose features had flushed up, leaped to his feet again, against all order and precedent in that rude chamber so reverent of law.

"I knew," he said, amid the silence of the wide-eyed people, "when I came to this house to-day, that the censure of Iceland might follow me when I left it, but its shame shall not pursue me. I also knew that there were persons not well content with the present order of things who might show their discontent as they had opportunity; but before the insinuations of base motives that have just been made I take you to witness that all that go with them are malicious figments. My capacity any man may impeach, but my honest name none shall question without challenge, for the sole pride I shall carry away with me when I leave this place shall be the pride of an upright life."

With that he put on his hat where he stood, and the people, thrilled to their hearts by his ringing voice, and his eyes full of splendid courage, broke into a great clamor of cheers.

"Peace, peace," cried a deep voice over the tumult. The old Bishop had risen to speak.

"This is a quarrelsome age," he said, "an age when there seems to be a strange itching in the spirits of men, when near every man seems to seek his brother's disquiet all he may, when wretched jealousies and the spirit of calumny turn everything to gall and wormwood. But can we not take the President's message for what

it claims to be, asking him for no reasons that concern us not? When has he betrayed us? His life since his coming here has been marked by strict integrity. When has pride been his bane? His humility has ever been his praise. He has been modest with the highest power and shown how little he valued those distances he was bound to keep up. When has mammon been his god? If he leaves us now he leaves us a poor man, as the Althing may well assure itself. But let us pray that this may not come to pass. When he was elected to the employment he holds, being so young a man, many trembled—and I among them—for the nation that had entrusted its goods and its lives to his management, but now we know that only in his merit and virtue can it find its safety and repose. Let me not be prodigal of praise before his face, but honor and honesty require this, that we say that so true a man is not to be found this day in Iceland."

The Bishop's words had quickened the pulse of the people, and cheer followed cheer again. "It is written," continued the Bishop, "that whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Our young President has this day sat down in the lowest room; and if he must needs leave us, having his own reasons that are none of ours, may the Lord cause His face to shine upon him, and comfort him in all his adversities."

Then there was but one voice in that assembly, the voice of a loud Amen. And Michael Sunlocks had risen again with a white face and dim eyes, to return his thanks, and say his last word before the vote for his release should be taken, when there was a sudden commotion, a sound of hurrying feet, a rush, a startled cry, and at the next moment a company of soldiers had entered the house from the cell below, and stood with drawn swords on the floor.

Before any one had recovered from his surprise one of the soldiers had spoken. "Gentlemen," he said, "the door is locked—you are prisoners of the King of Denmark."

"Betrayed!" shouted fifty voices at once, and then there was wild confusion.

"So this mysterious mummery is over at last," said the leader of the Levelers, rising up with rigid limbs, and a scared and whitened face. "Now we know why we have all been brought here to-night. Betrayed indeed—and *there* stands the betrayer."

So saying he pointed scornfully at Michael Sunlocks, who stood where he had risen, with the look of deep emotion hardly yet banished from his face by the look of bewilderment that followed it.

"False," Michael Sunlocks cried. "It is false as hell."

But in that quick instant the people looked at him with changed eyes, and received his words with a groan of rage that silenced him.

That night Jorgen Jorgensen sailed up the fiord, and, landing at Reykjavik, took possession of it, and the second Republic of Iceland was at an end.

That night, too, when the Fairbrothers, headed by Thurstan, trudged through the streets on their way to Government House, looking to receive the reward that had been promised them, they were elbowed by a drunken company of the Danes who frequented the drinking-shops on the Cheapstead.

"Why, here are his brothers," shouted one of the roisterers, pointing at the Fairbrothers.

"His brothers! His brothers!" shouted twenty more.

Thurstan tried to protest and Jacob to fraternize, but all was useless. The brethren were attacked for the relation they had claimed with the traitor who had fallen, and thus the six worthy and unselfish souls who had come to Iceland for gain and lost everything, and waited for revenge and only won suspicion, were driven off in peril of their necks, with a drunken mob at full cry behind them.

They took refuge in a coasting schooner, setting sail for the eastern fiords. Six days afterward the schooner was caught in the ice at the mouth of Seydis fiord, imprisoned there four months, out of reach of help from land or sea, and every soul aboard died miserably.

Short as had been the shrift of Red Jason, the shrift of Michael Sunlocks was yet shorter. On the order of Jorgen Jorgensen, the "late usurper of the Government of Iceland" was sent for the term of his natural life to the Sulphur Mines that he had himself established as a penal settlement.

And such was the fall of Michael Sunlocks.

THE BOOK OF RED JASON

CHAPTER I

WHAT BEFELL OLD ADAM

Now it would be a long task to follow closely all that befell the dear old Adam Fairbrother, from the time when the ship wherein he sailed for Iceland weighed anchor in Ramsey Bay. Yet not to know what strange risks he ran, and how in the end he overcame all dangers, by God's grace and his own extreme labor, is not to know this story of how two good men with a good woman between them pursued each other over the earth with vows of vengeance, and came together at length in heaven's good time and way. So not to weary the spirit with much speaking, yet to leave nothing unsaid that shall carry us onward to that great hour when Red Jason and Michael Sunlocks stood face to face, let us begin where Adam's peril began, and hasten forward to where it ended.

Fourteen days out of Ramsey, in latitude of sixty-four degrees, distant about five leagues north of the Faroes, and in the course of west-northwest, hoping to make the western shores of Iceland, Adam with his shipmates was overtaken by foul weather, with high seas and strong wind opposing them stoutly from the northwest. Thus they were driven well into the latitude of sixty-six off the eastern coast of Iceland, and there, though the seas still ran as high as to the poop, they were much beset by extraordinary pieces of ice which appeared to come down from Greenland. Then the wind abated, and an unsearchable and noisome fog followed; so dense that not an acre of sea could be seen from the topmast head, and so foul that the compasses would not work in it. After that, though they wrought night and day with poles and spikes, they were beaten among the ice as scarce any ship ever was before, and so terrible were the blows they suffered that many a time they thought the planks must be wrenched from the vessel's sides. Nevertheless they let fall sail, thinking to force their way through the ice before they were stoved to pieces, and, though the wind was low, yet the ship felt the canvas and cleared the shoals that encompassed her. The wind then fell to a calm, but still the fog hung heavily over the sea, which was black and smelt horribly.

And when they thought to try their soundings, knowing that somewhere thereabout the land must surely be, they heard a noise that seemed at first like the tract of the shore. It was worse than that, for it was the rut of a great bank of ice, two hundred miles deep, breaking away from the far shores of Greenland, and coming with its steady sweep, such as no human power could resist, toward the coasts of Iceland. Between that vast ice floe and the land they lay, with its hollow and terrible voice in their ears, and with no power to fly from it, for their sails hung loose and idle in the dead stillness of the air.

Oh! it is an awful thing to know that death is swooping down on you hour by hour; to hear it coming with its hideous thunder, like the groans of damned souls, and yet to see nothing of your danger for the day-darkness that blinds you. But the shipmaster was a stout-hearted fellow, and while the fog continued and he was without the help of wind or compass, he let go a raven that he had aboard to see if it could discover land. The raven flew to the northeast, and did not return to the ship, and by that token the master knew that the land of Iceland lay somewhere near on their starboard bow. So he was for lowering the long boat, to stand in with the coast and learn what part of Iceland it was, when suddenly the wind larged again, and before long it blew with violence.

At this their peril was much increased, for the night before had been bitterly cold, and the sails had been frozen where they hung outspread, and some of the cables were as stiff as icicles and half as thick as a man's body. Thus under wind that in a short space rose to a great storm, with canvas that could not be reefed, an ocean of ice coming down behind, and seas beneath of an untouchable depth, they were driven on and on toward an unknown shore.

From the like danger may God save all Christian men, even as he saved old Adam and his fellowship, for they had begun to prepare themselves to make a good end of their hopeless lives, when in the lift of the fog the master saw an opening in the coast, and got into it, and his ship rode safely on a quick tide down the fiord called Seydis fiord.

There the same night they dropped anchor in a good sound, and went instantly to prayer, to praise God for His delivery of them, and Adam called the haven where they moored "The Harbor of Good Providence." So with cheerful spirits, thinking themselves indifferently safe, they sought their berths, and so ended the first part of their peril in God's mercy and salvation.

But the storm that had driven them into their place of refuge drove their dread enemy after them, and in the night, while they

lay in the first sleep of four days, the ice encompassed them and crushed them against the rocks. The blow struck Adam out of a tranquil rest, and he thought nothing better than that he was awakening for another world. All hands were called to the pumps, for the master still thought the ship was stanch and might be pushed along the coast by the shoulders with crows of iron, and thus ride out to sea. But though they worked until the pumps sucked, it was clear that the poor vessel was stuck fast in the ice, and that she must soon get her death-wound. So, at break of day, the master and crew, with Adam Fairbrother, took what they could carry of provisions and clothes, and clambered ashore, leaving the ship to her fate.

It was a bleak and desolate coast they had landed upon, with never a house in sight, never a cave that they might shelter in, or a stone that would cover them against the wind; with nothing around save the bare face of a broad fell, black and lifeless, strewn over with small light stones sucked full of holes like the honeycomb, but without trees, or bush, or grass, or green moss. And there they suffered more privations than it is needful to tell, waiting for the ice to break, looking on at its many colors of blue, and purple, and emerald green, and yellow, and its many strange and wonderful shapes, resembling churches, and castles, and spires, and turrets, and cities, all ablaze in the noonday sun.

They built themselves a rude hut of the stones like pumice, and, expecting the dissolution of the ice, they kept watch on their ship, which itself looked like an iceberg frozen into a ship's shape. And meantime some of their company suffered very sorely. Though the year was not yet far advanced toward winter, some of the men swooned of the cold that came up from the ice of the fiord; the teeth of others became loose and the flesh of their gums fell away, and on the soles of the feet of a few the frost of the nights raised blisters as big as walnuts.

Partly from these privations and partly from loss of heart when at last one evil day he saw his good ship crushed to splinters against the rocks, the master fell sick, and was brought so low that in less than a week he lay expecting his good hour. And feeling his extremity he appointed Adam to succeed him as director of the company, to guide them to safety over the land, since Providence forbade that they should sail on the seas. Then, all being done, so far as his help could avail, he stretched himself out for his end, only praying in his last hours that he might be allowed to drink as much ale as he liked from the ship's stores that had been saved. This Adam ordered that he should, and as long as he lived the ale

was brought to him in the hut where he lay, and he drank it until, between draft and draft, it froze in the jug at his side. After that he died—an honest, a worthy, and strong-hearted man.

And Adam, being now by choice of the late master and consent of his crew the leader of the company, began to make a review of all men and clothes and victuals, and found that there were eleven of them in all, with little more than they stood up in, and provisions to last them, with sparing, three weeks at utmost. And seeing that they were cut off from all hope of a passage by sea, he set himself to count the chances of a journey by land, and by help of the ship's charts and much beating of the wings of memory to recover what he had learned of Iceland in the days when his dear lad Sunlocks had left him for these shores, he reckoned that by following the sea line under the feet of the great Vatna-Jokull, they might hope, if they could hold out so long, to reach Reykjavik at last. Long and weary the journey must be, with no town and scarce a village to break it, and no prospect of shelter by the way, save what a few farms might give them. So Adam ordered the carpenter to recover what he could of the ship's sails to make a tent, and of its broken timbers to make a cart to carry victuals, and when this was done they set off along the fell-side on the first stage of their journey.

The same day, toward nightfall, they came upon a little group of grass-covered houses at the top of the fiord, and saw the people of Iceland for the first time. They were a little colony cut off by impassable mountains from their fellows within the island, and having no ships in which they dare venture to their kind on the seas without; tall and strong-limbed in their persons, commonly of yellow hair, but sometimes of red, of which neither sex was ashamed; living on bread that was scarce eatable, being made of fish that had been dried and powdered; lazy and unclean; squalid and mean-spirited, and with the appearance of being depressed and kept under. It was a cheerless life they lived at the feet of the great ice-bound jokull and the margin of the frozen sea, so that looking around on the desolate place and the dumb wilderness of things before and behind, Adam asked himself why and how any living souls had ever ventured there.

But for all that the little colony were poor and wretched, the hearts of the shipwrecked company leaped up at sight of them, and in the joyful gabble of unintelligible speech between them old Adam found that he could understand some of the words. And when the islanders saw that in some sort Adam understood them they singled him out from the rest of his company, falling on his

neck and kissing him after the way of their nation, and concluding among themselves that he was one of their own people who had gone away in his youth and never been heard of after. And Adam, though he looked shy at their musty kisses, was nothing loth to allow that they might be Manxmen strayed and lost.

For Adam and his followers two things came of this encounter, and the one was to forward and the other to retard their journey. The first was that the islanders sold them twelve ponies, of the small breed that abound in that latitude, and gave them a guide to lead them the nearest way to the capital. The ponies cost them forty kroner, or more than two pounds apiece, and the guide was to stand to them in two kroner, or two shillings, a day. This took half of all they had in money, and many were the heavy groans of the men at parting with it; but Adam argued that their money was of no other value there than as a help out of their extremity, and that all the gold in the banks, if he had it, would be less to him then than the little beast he was bestriding.

The second of the two things that followed on that meeting with the islanders was that, just as they had started afresh on their way, now twelve in all, each man on his horse, and a horse in the shafts of the cart that held the victuals, a woman came running after them with a child in her arms, and besought them to take her with them. That any one could wish to share their outcast state was their first surprise, but the woman's terrified looks, her tears and passionate pleadings, seemed to say that to be homeless and houseless on the face of that trackless land was not so awful a fate but that other miseries could conquer the fear of it. So, failing to learn more of her condition than that she was friendless and alone, Adam ordered that, with her child, she should be lifted into the cart that was driven ahead of them.

But within an hour they were overtaken by a man, who came galloping after them, and said the woman had stolen the child—that it was his child, and that he had come to carry it back with him. At that Adam called on the woman to answer through the guide, and she said that the man was indeed the child's father, but that she was its mother; that he was a farmer, and had married her only that he might have a son to leave his farm to; that having given him this child he had turned her out of doors, and that in love and yearning for her little one, from whom she had been so cruelly parted, she had stolen into her old home, plucked up the babe and run away with it. Hearing this story, which the woman told through her tears, Adam answered the man that if the law of his country allowed a father to deal so with the mother of his

child it was a base and unnatural law, and merited the obedience of no man; so he meant to protect the woman against both it and him, and carry her along with their company. With that answer the man turned tail, but Adam's victory over him was dearly bought, at the cost of much vexation afterward and sore delay on the hard journey.

And now it would be long to tell of the trials of that passage over those gaunt solitudes, where there was no finger-post or mark of other human travelers. The men bore up bravely, loving most to comfort the woman and do her any tender office, or carry her child before them on their saddles. And many a time, at sight of the little one, and at hearing its simple prattle in a tongue they did not understand, the poor fellows would burst into tears, as if remembering, with a double pang, that they were exiles from that country far away, where other mothers held their own children to their breasts. Two of them sickened of the cold, and had to be left behind at a farm, where the people were kind and gentle and promised to nurse them until their companions could return for them. But the heaviest blow to all that company was the sickness and death of the child. Tenderly the rude sailor men nursed the little fellow one by one, and when nothing availed to keep his sweet face among them they mourned his loss as the worst disaster that had yet befallen them. The mother herself was distraught, and in the madness of her agony turned on Adam and reproached him, saying he had brought her child into this wilderness to kill it. Adam understood her misery too well to rebuke her ingratitude, and the same night that her babe was laid in his rest with a cross of willow wood to mark the place of it, she disappeared from their company, and where she went or what became of her no one knew, for she was seen by them no more.

But next morning they were overtaken by a number of men riding hard, and one of them was the woman's husband, and another the High Sheriff of the Quarter. These two called on Adam to deliver up the child, and when he told them that it was dead, and the mother gone, the husband would have fallen upon him with his knife, but for the Sheriff, who, keeping the peace, said that, as accessory after the fact of theft, Adam himself must go to prison.

Now, at this the crew of the ship began to set up a woful wail, and to double their fists and measure the strength of nine sturdy British seamen against that of ten lanky Icelanders. But Adam restrained them from violence, and indeed there was need for none, for the Sheriff was in no mood to carry his prisoner away with him. All he did was to take out his papers, and fill them up with

the name and description that Adam gave him, and then hand them over to Adam himself, saying they were the warrant for his imprisonment, and that he was to go on his way until he came to the next district, where there was a house of detention, which the guide would find for him, and there deliver up the documents to the Sheriff in charge.

With such instructions, and never doubting but they would be followed, the good man and his people wheeled about, and returned as they came.

And being so easily rid of them the sailors began to laugh at their simpleness, and, with many satisfied grunts, to advise the speedy destruction of the silly warrant that was the sole witness against Adam. But Adam himself said, no—that he was touched by the simplicity of a people that could trust a man to take himself to prison, and he would not wrong that confidence by any cheating. So he ordered the guide to lead on where he had been directed.

They reached the prison toward nightfall, and there old Adam bade a touching farewell of his people, urging them not to wait for him, but to push on to Reykjavik, where alone they could find ships to take them home to England. And some of the good fellows wept at this parting, though they all thought it foolish, but one old salt named Chalse shed no tears, and only looked crazier than ever, and chuckled within himself from some dark cause.

And indeed there was small reason to weep, because, simple as the first Sheriff's conduct had been, that of the second Sheriff was yet simpler, for when Adam presented himself as a prisoner the Sheriff asked for his papers, and then diving into his pocket to find them, the good man found that they were gone—lost, dropped by the way or destroyed by accident—and no search sufficed to recover them. So failing of his warrant the Sheriff shook his head at Adam's story and declined to imprison him, and the prisoner had no choice but to go free. Thus Adam returned to his company, who heard with laughter and delight of the close of his adventure, all save Chalse, who looked sheepish and edged away whenever Adam glanced at him. Thus ended in merriment an incident that threatened many evil consequences, and was attended by two luckless mischances.

The first of these two was that, by going to the prison, which lay three Danish miles out of the direct track to the capital, Adam and his company had missed young Oscar and Zoega's men, whom Michael Sunlocks had sent out from Reykjavik in search of them. The second was that their guide had disappeared and left them,

within an hour of bringing them to the door of the Sheriff. His name was Jonas; he had been an idle and a selfish fellow; he had demanded his wages day by day; and seeing Adam part from the rest, he had concluded that with the purse-bearer the purse of the company had gone. But he alone had known the course, and, worthless as he had been to them in other ways, the men began to rail at him when they found that he had abandoned them and left them to struggle on without help.

"The sweep!" "the thief!" "the waistrel!" "the gomerstang!" they called him, with wilder names beside. But old Adam rebuked them and said, "Good friends, I would persuade myself that urgent reasons alone can have induced this poor man to leave us. Were we not ourselves constrained to forsake two of our number several days back, though with the full design of returning to them to aid them when it should lie in our power? Thus I can not blame the Icelander without more knowledge of his intent, and so let us push on still and trust in God to deliver us, as he surely will."

And, sure enough, the next day after they came upon a man who undertook the place of the guide who had forsaken them. He was a priest and a very learned man, but poor as the poorest farmer. He spoke in Latin, and in imperfect Latin Adam made shift to answer him. His clothes were all but worn to rags, and he was shoeing his horse in the little garth before his door. His house, which stood alone save for the wooden church beside it, looked on the outside like a line of grass cones, hardly higher to their peaks than the head of a tall man, and in the inside it was low, dark, noisome, and noisy. In one room to which Chalse and the seamen were taken, three or four young children were playing, an old woman was spinning, and a younger woman, the priest's wife, was washing clothes. This was the living-room and sleeping-room, the birth-room and death-room of the whole family. In another room, to which Adam was led by the priest himself, the floor was strewn with saddles, nails, hammers, horseshoes, whips, and spades, and the walls were covered with bookshelves, whereon stood many precious old black-letter volumes. This was the workshop and study, wherein the good priest spent his long, dark days of winter.

And, being once more fully equipped for the journey, Adam ordered that they should lose no time in setting out afresh, with the priest on his own pony in front of them. Two days then passed without misadventure of any kind, and in that time they had come to a village, at which they should have forsaken the coast line and made for the interior, in order that they might cross to Reykjavik by way of Thingvellir, and so cut off the peninsula

ending in the Smoky Point. But a heavy fall of snow coming down suddenly, they were compelled to seek shelter at a farm, the only one for more than a hundred miles to east or west of them. There they rested while the snowstorm lasted, and it was the same weary downfall that kept Greeba to her house while Red Jason lay in his brain fever in the cell in the High Street, and Michael Sunlocks was out on the sea in search of themselves.

And when the snow had ceased to fall, and the frost that followed had hardened it, and the country, now white instead of black, was again fit to travel upon, it was found that the priest was unwilling to start. Then it appeared that downright drinking had been his sole recreation and his only bane; that the most serious affairs of night and day had always submitted to this great business; that in the interval of waiting for the passing of the snow, finding himself with a few kroner at command, he had begun on his favorite occupation, and that he now was too deeply immersed therein to be disturbed in less than a week.

Once again the seamen railed at their guide, as well as at the whole race of Icelanders, but Adam was all for lenity toward the priest and hope for themselves.

"My faithful companions," he said, "be not dismayed by any of these disasters, but let us put our whole trust in God. If it be our fortune to end our days in this desolate land, we are as near heaven here as at home. Yet let us use all honest efforts to save our natural lives, and we are not yet so far past hope of doing so but that I see a fair way by which we may effect it."

With that they set out again alone, and within an hour they had fallen on the second mischance of their journey, for failing to find the pass that would have led them across country through Thingvellir, they kept close by the sea line in the direction of the Smoky Point.

Now these misadventures, first with the mother and child, next with the Sheriffs, and then with the guides, though they kept back Adam and his company from that quick deliverance which they would have found in meeting with the messengers of Michael Sunlocks or with Michael Sunlocks himself, yet brought them in the end in the way of the only persons who are important to this story. For pursuing their mistaken way by the line of sea they came upon the place called Krisuvik. It was a grim wilderness of awful things, not cold and dead and dumb like the rest of that haggard land, but hot and alive with inhuman fire and clamorous with devilish noises. A wide ashen plain within a circle of hills whereon little snow could rest for the furnace that raged beneath

the surface; shooting with shrill whistles its shafts of hot steam from a hundred fumaroles; bubbling up in a thousand jets of boil-water; hissing from a score of green caldrons; grumbling low with mournful sounds underneath like the voice of subterranean wind, and sending up a noxious stench through heavy whorls of vapor that rolled in a fetid atmosphere overhead. Oh, it was a fearsome place, like nothing on God's earth but a moldering wreck of human body, vast and shapeless, and pierced deep with foulest ulcers; a leper spot on earth's face; a seething vat full of broth of hell's own brewing. And all around was the peaceful snow, and beyond the lines of the southern hills was the tranquil sea, and within the northern mountains was a quiet lake of water as green as the grass of spring.

Coming upon the ghastly place, printed deep with Satan's own features on the face of it, Adam thought that surely no human footstep was ever meant by God to echo among bodeful noises. But there he found two wooden sheds busy with troops of men coming and going about them, and a third house of the same kind in an early stage of building. Then asking questions as well as he was able, he learned that the boiling pits were the Sulphur Mines that the new Governor, the President of the Republic, had lately turned to account as a penal settlement, that the two completed sheds were the workshops and sleeping places of the prisoners, and that the unfinished house was intended for their hospital.

And it so chanced that while with his poor broken company Adam rested on his horse, to look on at this sight with eyes of wonder and fear, a gang of four prisoners passed on to their work in charge of as many warders, and one of the four men was Red Jason. His long red hair was gone, his face was thin and pale instead of full and tawny, and his eyes, once so bright, were heavy and slow. He walked in file, and about his neck was a collar of iron, with a bow coming over his head and ending on the forehead in a bell that rang as he went along. The wild vitality of his strong figure seemed lost, he bent forward as he walked, and looked steadfastly on the ground.

Yet, changed as he was, Adam knew him at a glance, and between surprise and terror, called on him by his name. But Jason heard nothing, and strode on like a man who had suddenly become deaf and blind under the shock of some evil day.

"Jason! Jason!" Adam cried again, and he dropped from the saddle to run toward him. But the warders raised their hands to warn the old man off, and Jason went on between them, without ever lifting his eyes or making sign or signal.

"Now, God save us! what can this mean?" cried Adam; and though with the lame help of his "old Manx" he questioned as well as he was able the men who were at work at the building of the hospital, nothing could he learn but one thing, and that was the strange and wondrous chance that his own eyes revealed to him: namely, that the last face he saw as he was leaving Man, on that bad night when he stole away from Greeba while she slept, was the first face he had seen to know it since he set foot on Iceland.

Nor was this surprise the only one that lay waiting for him in that gaunt place. Pushing on toward Reykjavik, the quicker for this sight of Red Jason, and with many troubled thoughts of Michael Sunlocks, Adam came with his company to the foot of the mountain that has to be crossed before the lava plain is reached which leads to the capital. And there the narrow pass was blocked to them for half an hour of precious time by a long train of men and ponies coming down the bridle path. They were Danes, to the number of fifty at least, mounted on as many horses, and with a score of tired horses driven on ahead of them. What their work and missions were in that grim waste Adam could not learn until he saw that the foremost of the troop had drawn up at one of the two wooden sheds, and then he gathered from many signs that they were there as warders to take charge of the settlement in place of the Icelandic officers who had hitherto held possession of it.

Little time he had, however, to learn the riddle of these strange doings, or get knowledge of the double rupture of the state of affairs that had caused them, for presently old Chalse came hurrying back to him from some distance ahead, with a scared face and stammering tongue, and one nervous hand pointing upward to where the last of the men and horses were coming down the bridle path.

"Lord-a-massy, who's this?" cried Chalse; and following the direction of his hand Adam saw what the old fellow pointed at, and the sight seemed to freeze the blood at his heart.

It was Michael Sunlocks riding between two of the Danish warders as their prisoner, silent, fettered, and bound.

Then Adam felt as if he had somewhere fallen into a long sleep, and was now awakening to a new life in a new world, where the people were the same as in the old one, but everything about them was strange and terrible. But he recovered from his terror as Michael Sunlocks came on, and he called to him, and Sunlocks heard him, and turned toward him with a look of joy and pain in one quick glance of a moment.

"My son! my boy!" cried Adam.

"Father! Father!" cried Michael Sunlocks.

But in an instant the warders had closed about Sunlocks, and hurried him on in the midst of them, while their loud shouts drowned all other voices.

And when the troop had passed him, Adam sat a moment silent on his little beast, and then he turned to his company and said:

"My good friends and faithful companions, my journey is at an end, and you must go on without me. I came to this land of Iceland only to find one who is my son indeed, though not flesh of my flesh, thinking to rest my old arm on his young shoulder. I have found him now, but he is in trouble, from some cause that I have yet to learn, and it is my old shoulder that his young arm must rest upon. And this that you have witnessed is not the meeting I looked for, and built my hopes on, and buoyed up my failing spirits with, through all the trouble of our many weary days. But God's will be done! So go your way, and leave me where His wisdom has brought me, and may His mercy fetch you in safety to your native country, and to the good souls waiting for you there."

But the rough fellows protested that come what might, leave him they never would, and old Chalse without more ado began to make ready to pitch their tent on the thin patch of grass where they stood.

And that evening, while Adam wandered over the valley, trying to get better knowledge of the strange events which he had read as if by flashes of lightning, and hearing in broken echoes of the rise and fall of the Republic, of the rise and fall of Michael Sunlocks, of the fall and return of Jorgen Jorgensen, a more wondrous chance than any that had yet befallen him was fast coming his way.

For late that night, when he sat in his grief, with his companions busied about him, comforting him with what tender offices and soft words their courageous minds could think of, a young Icelander came to the gap of the tent and asked, in broken English, if they would give a night's shelter to a lady who could find no other lodging, and was alone save for himself, who had been her guide from Reykjavik.

At that word Adam's own troubles were gone from him in an instant, and though his people would have demurred, he called on the Icelander to fetch the lady in, and presently she came, and then all together stood dumfounded, for the lady was Greeba herself.

It would be hard to tell how at first every other feeling was lost in one of surprise at the strange meeting of father and daugh-

ter, how surprise gave place to joy, and joy to pain, as bit by bit the history of their several adventures was unfolded each to the other. And while Greeba heard of the mischances that had overtaken old Adam, he, on his part, heard of the death of her mother and her brothers' ill-usage, of the message that came from Michael Sunlocks and her flight from home, of how she came to Iceland and was married, and of how Sunlocks went in pursuit of himself, and, returning to the capital, was betrayed into the hands of his enemies. All the long story of plot and passion he heard in the wild tangle of her hot and broken words, save only that part of it which concerned her quarrel with her husband; but when he mentioned Red Jason, saying that he had seen him, he heard that sad passage of her story also, told with fear and many bitter tears.

Adam comforted Greeba with what words of cheer he could command, in an hour when his own heart was dark and hopeless, and then amid the turmoil of so many emotions, the night being worn to midnight, they composed themselves to sleep.

Next morning, rising anxious and unrested, Adam saw the Icelandic warders, who had been supplanted in their employment by the Danes, start away from the settlement for their homes, and after them went a group of the Danish prisoners as free men, who had been imprisoned by the Republic as spies of the Government of Denmark. By this time Adam had decided on his course.

"Greeba," he said, "this imprisonment of Michael Sunlocks is unjust, and I see a way to put an end to it. No governor shall sentence him without judge or jury. But I will go on to Reykjavik and appeal to this Jorgen Jorgensen. If he will not hear me, I will appeal to his master, the King of Denmark. If Denmark will not listen, I will appeal to England, for Michael Sunlocks is a British subject, and may claim the rights of an Englishman. And if England turns a deaf ear to me, I will addres my prayer to God, who has never yet failed to right the wronged, or humble the arrogance of the mighty. Thank Heaven, that has brought me here. I thought I was coming to end my days in peace by his side who would shelter my poor foolish gray head, that had forgotten to protect itself. But strange are the ways of Providence. God has had His own purposes in bringing me here thus blindfolded, and, thanks to His mercy! I am not yet so old but I may yet do something. So come, girl, come, make ready, and we will go on our great errand together."

But Greeba had her own ends from the first in following Michael Sunlocks to the place of his imprisonment, and she answered and said:

"No, father, no. You may go on to Reykjavik, and do all this if you can, but my place is here, at my husband's side. He lost faith in my affection, and said I had married him for the glory that his place would bring me; but he shall see what a woman can go through for sake of the man she loves. I have my own plan of life in this place, and the power to carry it out. Therefore do not fear to leave me, but go, and God prosper you!"

"Let it be so," said Adam, and with that, after some words of explanation with the brave fellows who had followed him from the hour when, as ship-broken men, they set out on foot from the eastern fiord, he started on his journey afresh, leaving the tent and the last of their ship's victuals behind with Greeba, for Reykjavik was no more than a day's ride from Krisuvik.

When he was gone, Greeba went down to the tents at the mouth of the mines, and asked for the Captain. A Danish gentleman who did not know her, and whom she did not know, answered to that title, and then she said that hearing that a hospital was being built she had come out from Reykjavik to offer herself as a nurse if a nurse was wanted.

"A nurse *is* wanted," said the Captain, "and though we had no thought of a woman you have come in the nick of time."

So Greeba, under some assumed name, unknown to the contingent of Danish officers fresh from Denmark, who had that day taken the places of the Icelandic warders, and recognizable in her true character by two men only in Krisuvik, Michael Sunlocks and Red Jason, if ever they should see her, took up her employment as hospital nurse to the sick prisoners of the Sulphur Mines.

But having attained her end, or the first part of it, her heart was torn by many conflicting feelings. Would she meet with her husband? Would he come to be in her own charge? Oh, God forbid that it should ever come to pass. Yet God grant it, too, for that might help him to a swifter release than her dear old father could compass. Would she see Red Jason? Would Michael Sunlocks ever see him? Oh! God forbid that also. And yet, and yet, God grant it, after all.

Such were her hopes and fears, when the hospital shed was finished, and she took her place within it. And now let us see how Heaven fulfilled them.

CHAPTER II

THE SULPHUR MINES

Red Jason and Michael Sunlocks were together at last, within the narrow stockade of a penal settlement. These two, who had followed each other from land to land, the one on his errand of vengeance, the other on his mission of mercy, both now nourishing hatred and lust of blood, were thrown as prisoners into the Sulphur Mines of Krisuvik. There they met, they spoke, they lived and worked side by side, yet neither knew the other for the man he had sought so long and never found. This is the strange and wondrous chance that has now to be recorded, and only to think of it, whether as accident or God's ordinance, makes the blood to tingle in every vein. Poor and petty are the passions of man, and God's hand is over all.

The only work of Michael Sunlocks which Jorgen Jorgensen did not undo in the swift reprisals which followed on the restoration of his power was the use of the Sulphur Mines as a convict settlement. All he did was to substitute Danish for Icelandic guards, but this change was the beginning and end of the great event that followed. The Icelandic guards knew Red Jason, and if Michael Sunlocks had been sent out to them they would have known him also, and thus the two men must have soon known each other. But the Danish warders knew nothing of Jason, and when they brought out Michael Sunlocks they sent the Icelandic guards home. Thus Jason never heard that Michael Sunlocks was at the Sulphur Mines, and though in the whirl of many vague impressions, the distant hum of a world far off, there floated into his mind the news of the fall of the Republic, he could never suspect, and there was no one to tell him, that the man whom he had pursued and never yet seen, the man he hated and sought to slay, was a convict like himself, working daily and hourly within sight and sound of him.

Michael Sunlocks, on his part, knew well that Red Jason had been sent to the Sulphur Mines; but he also knew that he had signed Jason's pardon and ordered his release. More than this, he had learned that Jorgen Jorgensen had liberated all who had been

condemned by the Republic, and so he concluded that Jason had become a free man when he himself became a prisoner. But there had been a delay in the despatch of Jason's pardon, and when the Republic had fallen and the Danish officers had taken the place of the Icelanders, the captain of the mines had released the political prisoners only, and Jason, as a felon, had been retained. The other prisoners at the mines, some fifty in all, knew neither Michael Sunlocks nor Red Jason. They were old criminals from remote districts, sentenced to the jail at Reykjavik, during the first rule of Jorgen Jorgensen, and sent out to Krisuvik in the early days of the Republic.

Thus it chanced from the first that though together within a narrow space of ground Jason and Sunlocks were cut off from all knowledge of each other such as might have been gleaned from those about them. And the discipline of the settlement kept them back from that knowledge by keeping them for many months apart.

The two houses used as workshops and sleeping places were at opposite sides of the stockade, one at the north, the other at the south; one overlooking a broad waste of sea, the other at the margin of a dark lake of gloomy shore. Red Jason was assigned to the house near the sea, Michael Sunlocks to the house by the lake. These houses were built of squared logs with earthen floors, and wooden benches for beds. The prisoners entered them at eight o'clock in the evening, and left them at five in the morning, their hours of labor in summer being from five A. M. to eight P. M. They brought two tin cans, one tin containing their food, their second meal of the day, a pound of stock-fish, and four ounces of bread; the other tin intended for their refuse of slops and victuals and dirt of other kinds. Each house contained some twenty-five men and boys, and so peopled and used they had quickly become grimy and pestilential, the walls blotched with vermin stains, the floors encrusted with hard-trodden filth that was wet and slippery to the feet, and the atmosphere damp and foul to the nostrils from the sickening odors of decayed food.

It had been a regulation from the beginning that the latest comer at each of these houses should serve three months as housekeeper, with the duty of cleansing the horrible place every morning after his housemates had left it for their work. During this time he wore the collar of iron and the bell over his forehead, for it was his period of probation and of special degradation. Thus Red Jason served as housekeeper in the house by the sea, while Michael Sunlocks did the same duty in the house by the lake. Jason went

through his work listlessly, slowly, hopelessly, but without a murmur. Michael Sunlocks rebelled against its horrible necessities, for every morning his gorge rose at the exhalations of five-and-twenty unwashed human bodies, and the insupportable odor that came of their filthy habits.

This state of things went on for some two months, during which the two men had never met, and then an accident led to a change in the condition of both.

The sulphur dug up from the banks of the hot springs was packed in sacks and strapped upon ponies, one sack at each side of a pony and one on its back, to be taken to Hafnafiord, the nearest port for shipment to Denmark. Now the sulphur was heavy, the sacks were large, the ponies small, and the road down from the solfataras to the valley was rough with soft clay and great basaltic boulders. And one day as a line of the ponies so burdened came down the breast of the mountain, driven on by a carrier who lashed them at every step with his long whip of leather thongs, one little piebald mare, hardly bigger than a donkey, stumbled into a deep rut and fell. At that the inhuman fellow behind it flogged it again, and showered curses on it at every blow.

"Get up, get up, or I'll skin you alive," he cried, with many a hideous oath beside.

And at every fresh blow the little piebald struggled to rise, but it could not, while its terrified eyeballs stood out from the sockets and its wide nostrils quivered.

"Get up, you little lazy devil, get up," cried the brute with the whip, and still his blows fell like raindrops, first on the mare's flanks, then on its upturned belly, then on its head, its mouth, and last of all on its eyes.

But the poor creature's load held it down, and, struggle as it would, it could not rise. The gang of prisoners on the hillside who had just before burdened the ponies and sent them off, heard this lashing and swearing, and stopped their work to look down. But they thought more of the carrier than of the fallen pony, and laughed aloud at his vain efforts to bring it to its feet.

"Send him a hand up, Jonas," shouted one of the fellows.

"Pick him up in your arms, old boy," shouted another, and at every silly sally they all roared together.

The jeering incensed the carrier, and he brought down his whip the fiercer and quicker at every fresh blow, until the whizzing of the lash sang in the air, and the hills echoed with the thuds on the pony's body. Then the little creature made one final, frantic effort, and plunging with its utmost strength it had half risen to

its forelegs when one of the sacks slid from its place and got under its hind legs, whereupon the canvas gave way, the sulphur fell out, and the poor little brute slipped afresh and fell again, flat, full length, and with awful force and weight, dashing its head against a stone. At sight of this misadventure the prisoners above laughed once more, and the carrier leaped from his own saddle and kicked the fallen piebald in the mouth.

Now this had occurred within the space of a stone's throw from the house which Red Jason lived in and cleaned, and hearing the commotion as he worked within he had come out to learn the cause of it. Seeing everything in one quick glance, he pushed along as fast as he could for the leg-fetters that bound him, and came upon the carrier as he was stamping the life out of the pony with kicks on its palpitating sides. At the next moment he had laid the fellow on his back, and then, stepping up to the piebald, he put his arms about it to lift it to its feet. Meantime the prisoners above had stopped their laughing, and were looking on with eyes of wonder at Jason's mighty strength.

"God! Is it possible he is trying to lift a horse to its feet?" cried one.

"What? and three sacks of sulphur as well?" cried another.

"Never," cried a third; and all held their breath.

Jason did not stop to remove the sacks. He wound his great arms first under the little beast's neck, and raised it to its forefeet, and then squaring his broad flanks above his legs that held the ground like the hoofs of an ox, he made one silent, slow, tremendous upward movement, and in an instant the piebald was on its feet, affrighted, trembling, with startled eyeballs and panting nostrils, but secure and safe, and with its load squared and righted on its back.

"Lord bless us!" cried the convicts, "the man has the strength of Samson."

And at that moment one of the warders came hurrying up to the place.

"What's this?" said the warder, looking at the carrier on the ground, who was groaning in some little blood that was flowing from the back of his head.

At that question the carrier only moaned the louder, thinking to excite the more commiseration, and Jason said not a word. But the prisoners on the hillside very eagerly shouted an explanation; whereupon the carrier, a prisoner who had been indulged, straightway lost his privileges as punishment for his ill use of the property of the Government; and Jason, as a man whose great muscles were

thrown away on the paltry work of prison-cleaning, was set to delving sulphur on the banks of the hot springs.

Now this change for the better in the condition of Red Jason led to a change for the worse in that of Michael Sunlocks, for when Jason was relieved of his housekeeping and of the iron collar and bell that had been the badge of it, Sunlocks, as a malcontent, was ordered to clean Jason's house as well as his own. But so bad a change led to the great event in the lives of both, the meeting of these men face to face, and the way of it was this:

One day, the winter being then fully come, the mornings dark, and some new fallen snow lying deep over the warm ground of the stockade, Michael Sunlocks had been set to clearing away from the front of the log house on the south before Jason and his housemates had come out of it. His bodily strength had failed him greatly by this time, his face was pale, his large eyes were swollen and bloodshot, and under the heavy labor of that day his tall, slight figure stooped. But a warder stood over him leaning on a musket and urging him on with words that were harder to him than his hard work. His bell rang as he stooped, and rang again as he rose, and at every thrust of the spade it rang, so that when Jason and his gang came out of the sickening house, he heard it. And hearing the bell, he remembered that he himself had worn it, and wondering who had succeeded him in the vile office whereof he had been relieved, he turned to look upon the man who was clearing the snow.

There are moments when the sense of our destiny is strong upon us, and this was such a moment to Red Jason. He saw Michael Sunlocks for the first time, but without knowing him, and yet at that sight every pulse beat and every nerve quivered. A great sorrow and a great pity took hold of him. The face he looked upon moved him, the voice he heard thrilled him, and by an impulse that he could not resist he stopped and turned to the warder leaning on the musket and said:

"Let me do this man's work. It would be nothing to me. He is ill. Send him up to the hospital."

"March!" shouted his own warders and they hustled him along, and at the next minute he was gone. Then the bell stopped for an instant, for Michael Sunlocks had raised his head to look upon the man who had spoken. He did not see Jason's face, but his own face softened at the words he had heard and his bloodshot eyes grew dim.

"Go on!" cried the warder with the musket, and the bell began again.

All that day the face of Michael Sunlocks haunted the memory of Red Jason.

"Who was that man?" he asked of the prisoner who worked by his side.

"How should I know?" the other fellow answered sulkily.

In a space of rest Jason leaned on his shovel, wiped his brow, and said to his warder: "What was that man's name?"

"A 25," the warder answered moodily.

"I asked for his name," said Jason.

"What's that to you?" replied the warder.

A week went by, and the face of Sunlocks still haunted Jason's memory. It was with him early and late, the last thing that stood up before his inward eye when he lay down to sleep, the first thing that came to him when he awoke; sometimes it moved him to strange laughter when the sun was shining, and sometimes it touched him to tears when he thought of it in the night. Why was this? He did not know, he could not think, he did not try to find out. But there it was, a living face burnt into his memory—a face so strangely new to him, yet so strangely familiar, so unlike to anything he had ever yet seen, and yet so like to everything that was near and dear to himself, that he could have fancied there had never been a time when he had not had it by his side. When he put the matter to himself so he laughed and thought "how foolish." But no self-mockery banished the mystery of the power upon him of the man's face that he saw for a moment one morning in the snow.

He threw off his former listlessness and began to look keenly about him. But one week, two weeks, three weeks passed, and he could nowhere see the same face again. He asked questions but learned nothing. His fellow-prisoners began to jeer at him. Upon their souls, the big red fellow had tumbled into love with the young chap with the long flaxen hair, and maybe he thought it was a woman in disguise.

Jason knocked their chattering heads together and so stopped their ribald banter, but his warders began to watch him with suspicion, and he fell back on silence.

A month passed, and then the chain that was slowly drawing the two men together suddenly tightened. One morning the order came down from the office of the Captain that the prisoners' straw beds were to be taken out into the stockyard and burnt. The beds were not old, but dirty and damp and full of foul odors. The officers of the settlement said this was due to the filthy habits of the prisoners. The prisoners on their part said it came of the pes-

tilential hovels they were compelled to live in, where the ground was a bog, the walls and roof were a rotten coffin, and the air was heavy and lifeless. Since the change of warders, there had been a gradual decline in the humanity with which they had been treated, and to burn up their old beds without giving them new ones was to deprive them of the last comfort that separated the condition of human beings from that of beasts of the field.

But the Captain of the Mines was in no humor to bandy parts with his prisoners, and in ordering that the beds should be burnt to prevent an outbreak of disease, he appointed that the prisoner B 25 should be told off to do the work. Now B 25 was the prison name of Red Jason, and he was selected by reason of his great bodily strength, not so much because the beds required it, as from fear of the rebellion of the poor souls who were to lose them.

So at the point of a musket Red Jason was driven on to his bad work, and sullenly he went through it, muttering deep oaths from between his grinding teeth, until he came to the log hut where Michael Sunlocks slept, and there he saw again the face that had haunted his memory.

"This bed is dry and sound," said Michael Sunlocks, "and you shall not take it."

"Away with it," shouted the warder to Jason, who had seemed to hesitate.

"It is good and wholesome, let him keep it," said Jason.

"Go on with your work," cried the warder, and the lock of his musket clicked.

"Civilized men give straw to their dogs to lie on," said Michael Sunlocks.

"It depends what dogs they are," sneered the warder.

"If you take our beds, this place will be worse than an empty kennel," said Michael Sunlocks.

"Better that than the mange," said the warder. "Get along, I tell you," he cried again, handling his musket and turning to Jason.

Then, with a glance of loathing, Jason picked up the bed in his fingers, that itched to pick up the warder by the throat, and swept out of the place.

"Slave!" cried Michael Sunlocks after him. "Pitiful, miserable, little-hearted slave!"

Jason heard the hot words that pursued him, and his face grew as red as his hair, and his head dropped into his breast. He finished his task in less than half an hour more, working like a demented man at piling up the dirty mattresses into a vast heap, and setting

light to the damp straw. And while the huge bonfire burned, and he poked long poles into it to give it air to blaze by, he made excuse of the great heat to strip off the long rough overcoat that had been given him to wear through the hard months of the winter. By this time the warder had fallen back from the scorching flames, and Jason, watching his chance, stole away under cover of deep whorls of smoke, and got back into the log cabin unobserved.

He found the place empty; the man known to him as A 25 was not anywhere to be seen. But finding his sleeping bunk—a bare slab resembling a butcher's board—he stretched his coat over it where the bed had been, and then fled away like a guilty thing.

When the great fire had burned low the warder returned, and said: "Quick there; put on your coat and let's be off."

At that Jason pretended to look about him in dismay.

"It's gone," he said, in a tone of astonishment.

"Gone? What? Have you burnt it up with the beds?" cried the warder.

"Maybe so," said Jason, meekly.

"Fool," cried the warder; "but it's your loss. Now you'll have to go in your sheepskin jacket, snow or shine."

With a cold smile about the corners of his mouth, Jason bent his head and went on ahead of his warder.

If the Captain of the Mines had been left to himself he might have been a just and even a merciful man, but he was badgered by inhuman orders from Jorgen Jorgensen at Reykjavik, and one by one the common privileges of his prisoners were withdrawn. As a result of his treatment, the prisoners besieged him with petitions as often as he crossed their path. The loudest to complain and the most rebellious against petty tyranny was Michael Sunlocks; the humblest, the meekest, the most silent under cruel persecution was Red Jason. The one seemed aflame with indignation; the other appeared destitute of all manly spirit.

"That man might be dangerous to the Government yet," thought the Captain, after one of his stormy scenes with Michael Sunlocks. "That man's heart is dead within him," he thought again, as he watched Red Jason working as he always worked, slowly, listlessly, and as if tired out and longing for the night.

The Captain's humanity at length prevailed over his Governor's rigor, and he developed a form of penal servitude among the prisoners which he called the Free Command. This was a plan whereby the men whose behavior had been good were allowed the partial liberty of living outside the stockade in huts which they built for themselves. Ten hours a day they wrought at the mines,

the rest of the day and night was under their own control; and in return for their labor they were supplied with rations from the settlement.

Now Red Jason, as a docile prisoner, was almost the first to get promotion to the Free Command. He did not ask for it, he did not wish for it, and when it came he looked askance at it.

"Send somebody else," he said to his warders, but they laughed and turned him adrift.

He began to build his house of the lava stones on the mountain side, not far from the hospital, and near to a house being built by an elderly man much disfigured about the cheeks, who had been a priest, imprisoned long ago by Jorgen Jorgensen out of spite and yet baser motives. And as he worked at raising the walls of his hut, he remembered with a pang the mill he built in Port-y-Vullin, and what a whirlwind of outraged passion brought every stone of it to the ground again. With this occupation, and occasional gossip with his neighbor, he passed the evenings of his Free Command. And looking toward the hospital as often as he saw the little groups of men go up to it that told of another prisoner injured in the perilous labor of the sulphur mines, he sometimes saw a woman come out at the door to receive them.

"Who is she?" he asked of the priest.

"The foreign nurse," said the priest. "And a right good woman, too, as I have reason to say, for she nursed me back to life after that spurt of hot water had scalded these holes into my face."

That made Jason think of other scenes, and of tender passages in his broken life that were gone from him forever. He had no wish to recall them; their pleasure was too painful, their sweets too bitter; they were lost, and God grant that they could be forgotten. Yet every night as he worked at his walls he looked longingly across the shoulder of the hill in the direction of the hospital, half fancying he knew the sweet grace of the figure he sometimes saw there, and pretending with himself that he remembered the light rhythm of its movement. After a while he missed what he looked for, and then he asked his neighbor if the nurse were ill that he had not seen her lately.

"Ill? Well, yes," said the old priest. "She has been turned away from the hospital."

"What!" cried Jason; "you thought her a good nurse."

"She was too good, my lad," said the priest, "and a blackguard warder who had tried to corrupt her, and could not, announced that somebody else had done so."

"It's a lie," cried Jason.

"It was plain enough," said the priest, "that she was about to give birth to a child, and as she would make no explanation she was turned adrift."

"Where is she now?" asked Jason.

"Lying in at the farmhouse on the edge of the snow yonder," said the priest. "I saw her last night. She trusted me with her story, and it was straight and simple. Her husband had been sent out to the mines by the old scoundrel at Reykjavik. She had followed him, only to be near him and breathe the air he breathed. Perhaps with some wild hope of helping his escape she had hidden her true name and character and taken the place of a menial, being a lady born."

"Then her husband is still at the mines?" said Jason.

"Yes," said the priest.

"Does he know of her disgrace?"

"No."

"What's his name?"

"The poor soul would give me no name, but she knew her husband's number. It was A25."

"I know him," said Jason.

Next day, his hut being built and roofed after some fashion, Jason went down to the office of the Captain of the Mines and said, "I don't like the Free Command, sir. May I give it up in favor of another man?"

"And what man, pray?" asked the Captain.

"A25," said Jason."

"No," said the Captain.

"I've built my house, sir," said Jason, "and if you won't give it to A25, let the poor woman from the hospital live in it, and take me back among the men."

"That won't do, my lad. Go along to your work," said the Captain.

And when Jason was gone the Captain thought within himself, "What does this mean? Is the lad planning the man's escape? And who is this English woman that she should be the next thought in his head?"

So the only result of Jason's appeal was that Michael Sunlocks was watched the closer, worked the harder, persecuted the more by petty tyrannies, and that an order was sent up to the farmhouse where Greeba lay in the dear dishonor of her early motherhood, requiring her to leave the neighborhood of Krisuvik as speedily as her condition allowed.

This was when the long dark days of winter were beginning

to fall back before the sweet light of spring. And when the snow died off the mountains, and the cold garment of the jokulls was sucked full of holes like the honeycomb, and the world that had been white grew black, and the flowers began to show in the corries, and the sweet summer was coming, coming, coming, then Jason went down to the Captain of the Mines again.

"I've come, sir," he said, "to ask you to lock me up."

"Why?" said the Captain, "what have you been doing?"

"Nothing," said Jason, "but if you don't prevent me, I'll run away. This Free Command was bad enough to bear when the snow cut us off from all the world. But now that it is gone and the world is free, and the cuckoo is calling, he seems to be calling me, and I must go after him."

"Go," said the Captain, "and after you've tramped the deserts and swam the rivers, and slept on the ground, and starved on roots, we'll fetch you back, for you can never escape us, and lash you as we have lashed the others who have done likewise."

"If I go," said Jason, defiantly, "you shall never fetch me back, and if you catch me you shall never punish me."

"What? Do you threaten me?" cried the Captain.

Something in the prisoner's face terrified him, though he would have scorned to acknowledge his fear, and he straightway directed that Jason should be degraded, for insolence and insubordination, from the Free Command to the gangs.

Now this was exactly what Jason wanted, for his heart had grown sick with longing for another sight of that face which stood up before his inward eye in the darkness of the night. But remembering Jason's appeal on behalf of Michael Sunlocks, and his old suspicion regarding both, the Captain ordered that the two men should be kept apart.

So with Jason in the house by the sea, and Sunlocks in the house by the lake, the weeks went by; and the summer that was coming came, and like a bird of passage the darkness of night fled quite away, and the sun shone that shines at midnight.

And nothing did Jason see of the face that followed him in visions, and nothing did he hear of the man known to him as A25, except reports of brutal treatment and fierce rebellion. But on a day—a month after he had returned to the stockade—he was going in his tired and listless way between warders from one solfatara at the foot of the hill to another on the breast of it, when he came upon a horror that made his blood run cold.

It was a man nailed by his right hand to a great socket of iron in a log of driftwood, with food and drink within sight but out of

reach of him, and a huge knife lying close by his side. The man was A25.

Jason saw everything and the meaning of everything in an instant, that to get at the food for which he starved that man must cut off his own right hand. And there, like a devil, at his left lay the weapon that was to tempt him.

Nothing so inhuman, so barbarous, so fiendish, so hellish, had Jason yet seen, and with a cry like the growl of an untamed beast, he broke from his warders, took the nail in his fingers like a vise, tore it up out of the bleeding hand, and set Michael Sunlocks free.

At the next instant his wrath was gone, and he had fallen back to his listless mood. Then the warders hurried up, laid hold of both men, and hustled them away with a brave show of strength and courage to the office of the Captain.

Jorgen Jorgensen himself was there, and it was he who had ordered the ruthless punishment. The warders told their tale, and he listened to them with a grin on his cruel face.

"Strap them up together," he cried, "leg to leg and arm to arm."

And when this was done he said, bitterly:

"So you two men are fond of one another's company! Well, you shall have enough of it and to spare. Day after day, week after week, month after month, like as you are now, you shall live together, until you abhor and detest and loathe the sight of each other. Now go!"

CHAPTER III

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

Red Jason and Michael Sunlocks, now lashed together, were driven back to their work like beasts of the field. They knew well what their punishment meant to them—that in every hour of life henceforward, in every act, through every thought, each man should drag a human carcass by his side. The barbarity of their doom was hideous; but strangely different were the ways they accepted it. Michael Sunlocks was aflame with indignation; Jason was crushed with shame. The upturned face of Sunlocks was pale, his flaxen hair was disheveled, his bloodshot eyes were afire. But Jason's eyes, full of confusion, were bent on the ground, his tanned face trembled visibly, and his red hair, grown long as of old, fell over his drooping shoulders like a mantle of blood.

And as they trudged along, side by side, in the first hours of their unnatural partnership, Sunlocks struggled hard to keep his

eyes from the man with whom he was condemned to live and die, lest the gorge of his very soul should rise at the sight of him. So he never once looked at Jason through many hours of that day. And Jason, on his part, laboring with the thought that it was he who by his rash act had brought both of them to this sore pass, never once lifted his eyes to the face of Sunlocks.

Yet each man knew the other's thought before ever a word had passed between them. Jason felt that Sunlocks already abhorred him, and Sunlocks knew that Jason was ashamed. This brought them after a time into sympathy of some sort, and Jason tried to speak and Sunlocks to listen.

"I did not mean to bring you to this," said Jason, humbly. And Sunlocks, with head aside, answered as well as he could for the disgust that choked him, "You did it for the best."

"But you will hate me for it," said Jason.

And once again, with what composure he could command, Sunlocks answered, "How could I hate you for saving me from such brutal treatment?"

"Then you don't regret it?" said Jason, pleadingly.

"It is for you, not me, to regret it," said Sunlocks.

"Me?" said Jason.

Through all the shameful hours the sense of his own loss had never yet come to him. From first to last he had thought only of Sunlocks.

"My liberty was gone already," said Sunlocks. "But you were free—free as any one can be in this hell on earth. Now you are bound—you are here like this—and I am the cause of it."

Then Jason's rugged face was suddenly lighted up with a surprising joy. "That's nothing," he said.

"Nothing?" said Sunlocks.

"I mean that I care nothing, if you don't," said Jason.

It was the turn of Sunlocks to feel surprise. He half turned toward Jason. "Then you don't regret it?" he asked.

"No," said Jason firmly. "And you?"

Sunlocks felt that tears, not disgust, were choking him now.

"No," he answered, shamefacedly, turning his head away.

"March!" shouted the warders, who had been drinking their smuggled sneps while their prisoners had been talking.

That day, Jorgen Jorgensen went back to Reykjavik, for the time of the Althing was near, and he had to prepare for his fourteen days at Thingvellir. And the Governor being gone, the Captain of the Mines made bold so far to relax the inhumanity of his sentence as to order that the two men who were bound together

during the hours of work should be separated for the hours of sleep. But never forgetting his own suspicion that Red Jason was an ally of Michael Sunlocks, planning his escape, he ordered also that no speech should be allowed to pass between them. To prevent all communion of this kind he directed that the men should work and sleep apart from the other prisoners, and that their two warders should attend them night and day.

But though the rigor of discipline kept them back from free intercourse, no watchfulness could check the stolen words of comfort that helped the weary men to bear their degrading lot.

That night, the first of their life together, Michael Sunlocks looked into Jason's face and said, "I have seen you before somewhere. Where was it?"

But Jason remembered the hot words that had pursued him on the day of the burning of the beds, and so he made no answer.

After a while, Michael Sunlocks looked closely into Jason's face again, and said, "What is your name?"

"Don't ask it," said Jason.

"Why not," said Sunlocks.

"You might remember it."

"Even so, what then?"

"Then you might also remember what I did, or tried to do, and you would hate me for it," said Jason.

"Was your crime so inhuman?" said Sunlocks.

"It would seem so," said Jason.

"Who sent you here?"

"The Republic."

"You won't tell me your name?"

"I've got none, so to speak, having had no father to give me one. I'm alone in the world."

Michael Sunlocks did not sleep much that night, for the wound in his hand was very painful, and next morning, while Jason dressed it, he looked into his face once more and said, "You say you are alone in the world."

"Yes," said Jason.

"What of your mother?"

"She's dead, poor soul."

"Have you no sister?"

"No."

"Nor brother?"

"No—that's to say—no, no."

"No one belonging to you?"

"No."

"Are you quite alone?"

"Ay, quite," said Jason. "No one to think twice what becomes of me. Nobody to trouble whether I am here or in a better place. Nobody to care whether I live or die."

He tried to laugh as he said this, but in spite of his brave show of unconcern his deep voice broke and his strong face quivered.

"But what's your own name?" he said abruptly.

"Call me—brother," said Michael Sunlocks.

"To your work," cried the warders, and they were hustled out.

Their work for the day was delving sulphur from the banks of the solfataras and loading it on the backs of the ponies. And while their warders dozed in the heat of the noonday sun, they wiped their brows and rested.

At that moment Jason's eyes turned toward the hospital on the opposite side of the hill, and he remembered what he had heard of the good woman who had been nurse there. This much at least he knew of her, that she was the wife of his yoke-fellow, and he was about to speak of her trouble and dishonor when Michael Sunlocks said:

"After all, you are luckiest to be alone in the world. To have ties of affection is only to be the more unhappy."

"That's true," said Jason.

"Say you love somebody and all your heart is full of her? You lose her, and then where are you?"

"But that's not your own case," said Jason. "Your wife is alive, is she not?"

"Yes."

"Then you have not lost her?"

"There is a worse loss than that of death," said Sunlocks.

Jason glanced quickly into his face, and said tenderly, "I know —I understand. There was another man?"

"Yes."

"And he robbed you of her love?" said Jason, eagerly.

"Yes."

"And you killed him?" cried Jason, with panting breath.

"No. But God keep that man out of my hands."

"Where is he now?"

"Heaven knows. He was here, but he is gone; for when the Republic fell I was imprisoned, and two days before that he was liberated."

"Silence!" shouted the warders, awakening suddenly and hearing voices.

Jason's eyes had begun to fill, and down his rugged cheeks the

big drops were rolling one by one. After that he checked the impulse to speak of the nurse. The wife of his yoke-fellow must be an evil woman. The prisoner-priest must have been taken in by her. For once the warders must have been right.

And late that night, while Jason was dressing the wounded hand of Michael Sunlocks with wool torn from his own sheepskin jerkin, he said, with his eyes down:

"I scarce thought there was anything in common between us two. You're a gentleman, and I'm only a rough fellow. You have been brought up tenderly, and I have been kicked about the world since I was a lad in my poor mother's home, God rest her! But my life has been like yours in one thing."

"What's that?" said Michael Sunlocks.

"That another man has wrecked it," said Jason. "I never had but one glint of sunshine in my life, and that man wiped it out forever. It was a woman, and she was all the world to me. But she was proud and I was poor. And he was rich, and he came between us. He had everything, and the world was at her feet. I had nothing but that woman's love, and he took it from me. It was too cruel, and I could not bear it—God knows I could not."

"Wait," cried Michael Sunlocks. "Is that why you are here! Did you—you did not—no—"

"No, I know what you mean; but I did not kill him. No, no, I have never seen him. I could never meet with him, try how I would."

"Where is he now?"

"With her—in happiness and freedom and content, while I am here in misery and bondage and these ropes. But there will be a reckoning between us yet. I know there will. I swear there will. As sure as there is a God in Heaven, that man and I will one day stand together face to face."

Then Michael Sunlocks took both Jason's hands.

"My brother," he cried fervently. "Brother now more than ever; brother in suffering, brother in weakness, brother in strength."

"Silence there!" shouted the warders, and the two men were separated for the night.

The wound in the hand of Michael Sunlocks grew yet more painful, and he slept even less than before. Next day the power of life was low in him, and seeing this, Jason said, when the warders stepped up to lash them together, "He is ill, and not fit to go out. Let me work alone to-day. I'll do enough for both of us."

But no heed was paid to Jason's warning, and Michael Sunlocks was driven out by his side. All that day, the third of their life together, they worked with difficulty, for the wound in the hand of Sunlocks was not only a trouble to himself but an impediment to Jason also. Yet Jason gave no hint of that, but kept the good spade going constantly, with a smile on his face through the sweat that stood on it, and little stolen words of comfort and cheer. And when the heat was strongest, and Sunlocks would have stumbled and fallen, Jason contrived a means to use both their spades together, only requiring that Sunlocks should stoop when he stooped, that the warders might think he was still working. But their artifice was discovered, and all that came of it was that they were watched the closer and driven the harder during the hours that remained of that day.

Next day, the fourth of their direful punishment, Sunlocks rose weak and trembling, and scarce able to stand erect. And with what spirit he could summon up he called upon the warders to look upon him and see how feeble he was, and say if it was fair to his yokefellow that they should compel him to do the work of two men and drag a human body after him. But the warders only laughed at his protest, and once again he was driven out by Jason's side.

Long and heavy were the hours that followed, but Sunlocks, being once started on his way, bore up under it very bravely, murmuring as little as he might, out of thought for Jason. And Jason helped along his stumbling footsteps as well as he could for the arm that was bound to him. And seeing how well they worked by this double power of human kindness, the warders laughed again, and made a mock at Sunlocks for his former cry of weakness. And so, amid tender words between themselves, and jeers cast in upon them by the warders, they made shift to cheat time of another weary day.

The fifth day went by like the fourth, with heavy toil and pain to make it hard, and cruel taunts to make it bitter. And many a time, as they delved the yellow sulphur bank, a dark chill crossed the hearts of both, and they thought in their misery how cheerfully they would dig for death itself, if only it lay in the hot clay beneath them.

That night when they had returned to the hut wherein they slept, or tried to sleep, they found that some well-meaning stranger had been there in their absence and nailed up on the grimy walls above their beds, a card bearing the text, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And so ghastly seemed the irony of those words in that place that Jason

muttered an oath between his teeth as he read them, and Sunlocks threw himself down, being unbound for the night, with a peal of noisy laughter, and a soul full of strange bitterness.

The next day after that, the sixth of their life together, rose darker than any day that had gone before it, for the wounded hand of Michael Sunlocks was then purple and black, and swollen to the size of two hands, and his bodily strength was so low that, try as bravely as he might to stand erect, whenever he struggled to his feet he fell to the ground again. Thinking nothing of this, the warders were for strapping him up to Jason as before, but while they were in the act of doing so he fainted in their hands. Then Jason swept them from him, and vowed that the first man that touched Sunlocks again should lie dead at his feet.

"Send for the Captain," he cried, "and if the man has any bowels of compassion let him come and see what you have done."

The warders took Jason at his word, and sent a message to the office saying that one of their prisoners was mutinous, and the other pretending to be ill. After a time the Captain despatched two other warders to the help of the first two and these words along with them for his answer: "If one rebels, punish both."

Nothing loth for such exercise, the four warders set themselves to decide what the punishment should be, and while they laid their heads together, Jason was bending over Sunlocks, who was now recovered to consciousness, asking his pardon in advance for the cruel penalty that his rash act was to bring on both of them.

"Forgive me," he said. "I couldn't help it. I didn't know what I was doing."

"There is nothing to forgive, brother," whispered Michael Sunlocks.

And thus with stammering tongues they comforted one another, and with hands clasped together they waited for the punishment that had to come.

At length the warders concluded that for refusing to work, for obstinate disobedience, and for threatening, nothing would serve but that their prisoners should straightway do the most perilous work to be found that day at the sulphur mines.

Now this was the beginning of the end for Red Jason and Michael Sunlocks, and if the evil chance had not befallen them, God alone can say how long they might have lived together at Krisuvik, or how soon or how late they would have become known to one another by their true names and characters. But heaven itself had its purposes, even in the barbarity of base-hearted men,

as a means toward the great end that was near at hand. And this was the way of its coming.

A strange change that no one could rightly understand had lately come upon the natural condition of the sulphur mines. The steam that rose from the solfataras had grown less and less week by week and day by day, until in some places it had altogether subsided. This was a grave sign, for in the steam lay the essence of the sulphur, and if it ceased to rise from the pits the sulphur would cease to grow.

Other changes came with this, such as that deep subterranean noises arose from parts of the plain where no fissures had yet been seen, and that footsteps on the earth around these places produced a hollow sound.

From these signs, taken together, the Captain had concluded that the life of the mines, the great infernal fire that raged beneath the surface, was changing ground, leaving the valley, where it had lived for ages, for the mountain heights, where the low grumblings were now heard to come from beneath the earth's crust of lava and basaltic rock.

So, taking counsel of his people, he decided to bore the ground in these new places in the hope of lighting on living solfataras that would stand to him against the loss of the dead ones. And it chanced that he was in the midst of many busy preparations for this work when the report of the warders reached him, and the boring was still uppermost in his mind when he sent back his answer as he came upon the flogging and stopped it.

Thus it happened that the first thought that came to the warders was to send their prisoners to one of the spots that had been marked on the hillside for the test of bore and spade.

So, in less than half an hour more, Jason and Sunlocks, lashed together, arm to arm and leg to leg, were being driven up the mountain to the place assigned to them. They found it a hideous and awesome spot. Within a circle of two yards across, the ground was white and yellow and scaly, like a scab on evil flesh. It was hot, so that the hand could not rest upon it, and hollow, so that the foot made it shake, and from unseen depths beneath it a dull thud came up at intervals like nothing else but the knocking of a man buried alive at the sealed door of his tomb.

Beneath this spot the heart of the solfatara was expected to lie, and Jason and Sunlocks were commanded to open it. Obeying gloomily, they took the bore first and pierced the scaly surface, and instantly a sizzling and bubbling sound came up from below. Then they followed with the spades, but scarcely had they lifted the

top crust when twenty great fissures seemed to open under their feet, and they could see lurid flames rushing in wild confusion, like rivers of fire in the bowels of the earth.

It was a sight at which the stoutest heart might have quailed, and Jason leaped back to the bank and dragged Sunlocks after him.

"This is not safe," he said.

"In with you," shouted the warders from their own safe footing of four yards away. With a growl from between his clinched teeth, Jason stepped back into the hole, and Sunlocks followed him. But hardly had they got down to the fearsome spot again, when a layer of clay fell in from it, leaving a deep wide gully, and then scarcely a yard of secure footing remained.

"Let us stop while we are safe," Jason cried.

"Dig away," shouted the warders.

"If we do, we shall be digging our own graves," said Jason.

"Begin," shouted the warders.

"Listen to me," said Jason. "If we are to open this pit of fire and brimstone, at least let us be free of these ropes. That's but fair, that each man may have a chance of his life."

"Go on," shouted the warders.

"If we go on like this we shall be burned and boiled alive," said Jason.

"Get along," shouted the warders with one voice, and then an awful light flashed in Jason's eyes, for he saw that out of revenge for their paltry fines they had resolved to drive two living men to their death.

"Now, listen again," said Jason, "and mark my words. We will do as you command us, and work in this pit of hell. I will not die in it—that I know. But this man beside me is weak and ill, heaven curse your inhumanity; and if anything happens to him, and I am alive to see it, as sure as there is strength left in my arms, and blood in my body, I will tear you limb from limb."

So saying, he plunged his spade into the ground beneath him, with an oath to drive it, and at the next instant there was a flash of blue flame, an avalanche of smoke, a hurricane of unearthly noises, a cry like that of a dying man, and then an awful silence.

When the air had cleared, Jason stood uninjured, but Michael Sunlocks hung by his side inert and quiet, and blinded by a jet of steam.

What happened to Jason thereafter no tongue of man could tell. All the fire of his spirit, and all the strength of all his days seemed to flow back upon him in that great moment. He parted

the ropes that bound him as if they had been green withes that he snapped asunder. He took Sunlocks in his arms and lifted him up to his shoulder, and hung him across it, as if he had been a child that he placed there. He stepped out of the deadly pit, and strode along over the lava mountain as if he were the sole creature of the everlasting hills. His glance was terrific, his voice was the voice of a wounded beast. The warders dropped their muskets and fled before him like affrighted sheep.

CHAPTER IV

THROUGH THE CHASM OF ALL MEN

It was still early morning; a soft gray mist lay over the moorlands, but the sun that had never set in that northern land was rising through clouds of pink and white over the bald crown of a mountain to the northeast. And toward the rising sun Jason made his way, striding on with the red glow on his own tanned and blackened face, and its ghastly mockery of the hues of life on the pallid cheeks and whitened lips of Sunlocks. From his right ankle and right wrist hung the rings of his broken fetters, and from the left ankle and left wrist of Sunlocks trailed the ropes that had bound them both. Never a moment did he pause to breathe or think or question himself. On and on he went, over lava blocks and lava dust, basaltic rock and heavy clay, and hot blue earth and scorched and withered moss. And still Sunlocks lay over his right side and shoulder, motionless and unconscious, hardly breathing, but alive, with his waist encircled by Jason's great right arm, and his waist-belt grasped tight as with the grip of a talon by Jason's hard right hand.

Before long, Sunlocks recovered some partial consciousness and cried in a faint voice for water. Jason glanced around on the arid plain as if his eyes would pierce the ground for a spring, but no water could he see on any side of him, and so without a word of answer he strode along.

"Water, water," cried Sunlocks again, and just then Jason caught the side-long glint of a river that ran like a pearl chain down the black breast of a mountain.

"Water," cried Sunlocks again and yet again, in a voice of pain and deep pleading, not rightly knowing yet where he was or what bad chance had befallen him.

"Yes, yes, one moment more, only a moment, there—there—there!" whispered Jason.

And muttering such words of comfort and cheer, he quickened his pace toward the river. But when he got near to it he stopped short with a cry of dismay. The river bubbled and smoked.

"Hot! It is hot," cried Jason. "And the land is accursed."

At that word, Sunlocks uttered a low groan, and his head, which had been partly lifted, fell heavily backward, and his hair hung over Jason's shoulder. He was again unconscious.

Then more than ever like a wild beast ranging the hills with its prey, Jason strode along. And presently he saw a lake of blue water far away. He knew it for cold water, blessed, ice-cold water, water to bathe the hot forehead with, water to drink. With a cry of joy, which there was no human ear to hear, he turned and made toward it; but just as he did so, softening as he went, and muttering from his own parched throat words of hope and comfort to the unconscious man he carried, a gunshot echoed through the mountains above his head.

He knew what the shot was; it was the signal of his escape. And looking down to the valley, he saw that the guards of the settlement were gathering on their ponies in the very line of the plain that he must traverse to reach the water for which Sunlocks thirsted.

Then "Water, water," came again in the same faint voice as before, and whether with his actual ear he heard that cry, or in the torment of his distraught sense it only rang out in his empty heart, no man shall say. But all the same he answered it from his choking throat, "Patience, patience."

And then, with another look downward, the look of a human stag, at the cool water which he might not reach and live, he turned himself back to the mountains.

What happened to him then, and for many weary hours thereafter, it would weary the spirit to tell: what plains he crossed, what hills he climbed, and in what desolate wilderness he walked alone, with no one for company save the unconscious man across his shoulder, and no eye to look upon him save the eye of God.

And first he crossed a wide sea of lava dust, black as the ravens that flew in the air above it, and bounded by hills as dark as the earth that were themselves vast sand drifts blown up into strange and terrible shapes by mighty tempests. Then he came upon a plain strewn over with cinders, having a grim crag frowning upon it, like the bank of a smelting-house, with its screes of refuse rolling down. By this time the sun had risen high and grown hot,

and the black ground under his feet began to send up the reflection of the sun's rays into his face to scorch it.

And still the cry of "Water, water," rang in his ears, and his eyes ranged the desolate land to find it, but never a sign of it could he see, and his strong heart sank. Once, when he had mounted with great toil to the top of a hill, where all behind him had been black and burnt and blistered, he saw a wide valley stretching in front of him that was as green as the grass of spring. And he thought that where there was grass there would surely be water, streams of water, rivers of water, pools of water, sunny stretches of sweet water lying clear and quiet over amber pebbles and between soft brown banks of turf.

So at this sight his heart was lifted up, and bounding down the hillside, over the lava blocks, as fast as he could go for his burden, he began to sing from his cracked throat in his hoarse and quavery voice. But when he reached the valley his song stopped, and his heart sank afresh, for it was not grass, but moss that grew there, and it lay only on big blocks of lava, with never a drop of moisture or a handful of earth between them.

He was crushed, but he was strong of heart and would not despair. So he pushed on over this green plain, through a hundred thousand mossy mounds that looked like the graves of a world of dead men.

But when he came out of it his case seemed yet more forlorn, for leaving the soft valley behind he had come upon a lava stream, a sea of stones, not dust or cinders, but a bleached cake of lava rock, with never a soft place for the foot, and never a green spot for the eye. Not a leaf to rustle in the breeze, not a blade of grass to whisper to it, not a bird's sweet voice, or the song of running water. Nothing lived there but dead silence on earth and in air. Nothing but that, or in other hours the roar of wind, the rattle of rain, and the crash of thunder.

All this time Jason had walked on under the sweltering sun, never resting, never pausing, buoyed up with the hope of water—water for the fainting man that he might not die. But in the desolation of that moment he dropped Sunlocks from his shoulder, and threw himself down beside him.

And sitting there, with the head of his unconscious comrade upon his knees, he put it to himself to say what had been the good of all that he had done, and if it would not have been better for both of them if he had submitted to base tyranny and remained at the Mines. Had he not brought this man out to his death? What else was before him in this waste wilderness, where there was no drop

of water to cool his hot forehead or moisten his parched tongue? And thinking that his yoke-fellow might die, and die at his hands, and that he would then be alone, with the only man's face gone from him that had ever brightened life for him, his heart began to waver and to say, "Rise up, Jason, rise up and go back."

But just then he was conscious of the click-clack of horses' hoofs on the echoing face of the stony sea about him, and he shaded his eyes and looked around, and saw in the distance a line of men on ponies coming on in his direction. And though he thought of the guards that had been signaled to pursue him, he made no effort to escape. He did not stir or try to hide himself, but sat as before with the head of his comrade on his knees.

The men on the ponies came up and passed him closely by without seeing him. But he saw them clearly and heard their talk. They were not the guard from the settlement, but Thing-men bound for Thingvellir and the meeting of the Althing there. And while they were going on before him in their laughter and high spirits, Jason could scarce resist the impulse to cry out to them to stop and take him along with them as their prisoner, for that he was an outlaw who had broken his outlawry, and carried away with him this fainting man at his knees.

But before the words would form themselves, and while his blistering lips were shaping to speak them, a great thought came to him, and struck him back to silence.

Why had he torn away from the Sulphur Mines? Only from a gloomy love of life, life for his comrade, and life for himself. And what life was there in this trackless waste, this moldering dumb wilderness? None, none. Nothing but death lay here; death in these gaunt solitudes; death in these dry deserts; death amid these ghastly, haggard wrecks of inhuman things. What chance could there be of escape from Iceland? None, none, none.

But there was one hope yet. Who were these men that had passed him? They were Thing-men; they were the lawmakers. Where were they going? They were going to the Mount of Laws. Why were they going there? To hold their meeting of the Althing. What was the Althing? The highest power of the State; the supreme Court of legislature and law.

What did all this mean? It meant that Jason as an Icelander knew the laws of his country, and that one great law above all other laws he remembered at that instant. It concerned outlaws. And what were they but outlaws, both of them? It ordered that the condemned could appeal at the Althing against the injustice of

his sentence. If the ranks of the judges opened for his escape, then he was saved.

Jason leaped to his feet at the thought of it. That was what he would do for his comrade and for himself. He would push on to Thingvellir. It was five-and-thirty heavy miles away; but no matter for that. The angel of hope would walk with him. He would reach the Mount of Laws, carrying his comrade all the way. And when he got there, he would plead the cause of both of them. Then the judges would rise, and part, and make way for them, and they would be free men thereafter.

Life, life, life! There was life left for both of them, and very sweet it seemed after the shadow of death that had so nearly encompassed them. Only to live! Only to live! They were young yet and loved one another as brothers.

And while thinking so, in the whirl of his senses as he strode to and fro over the lava blocks, Jason heard what his ear had hitherto been too heavy to catch, the thin music of falling water near at hand. And, looking up, he saw a tiny rivulet like a lock of silken hair dropping over a round face of rock, and thanking God for it, he ran to it, and filled both hands with it, and brought it to Sunlocks and bathed his forehead with it, and his poor blinded eyes, and moistened his withered lips, whispering meantime words of hope and simple tender nothings, such as any woman might croon over her sick boy.

"Come, boy, come then, come, boy, come," he whispered, and clapped his moist hands together over the placid face to call it back to itself.

And while he did so, sure enough Sunlocks moved, his lips parted, his cheeks quivered, and he sighed. And seeing these signs of consciousness, Jason began to cry, for the great rude fellow who had not flinched before death was touched at the sight of life in that deep place where the strongest man is as a child.

But just then he heard once more the sound of horses' hoofs on the lava ground, and, looking up, he saw that there could be no error this time, and that the guards were surely coming. Ten or twelve of them there seemed to be, mounted on as many ponies, and they were driving on at a furious gallop over the stones. There was a dog racing in front of them, another dog was running at their heels, and with the barking of the dogs, the loud whoops of the men to urge the ponies along, and to the clatter of the ponies' hoofs, the plain rang and echoed.

Jason saw that the guards were coming on in their direction. In three minutes more they would be upon them. They were taking

the line followed by the Thing-men. Would they pass them by unseen as the Thing-men had passed them? That was not to be expected, for they were there to look for them. What was to be done? Jason looked behind him. Nothing was there but an implacable wall of stone, rising sheer up into the sky, with never a bough, or tussock of grass to cling to that a man might climb. He looked around. The ground was covered with cracked domes like the arches of buried cities, but the caverns that lay beneath them were guarded by spiked jaws which only a man's foot could slip through. Not a gap, not a hole to creep into; not a stone to crouch under; not a bush to hide behind; nothing in sight on any side but the bare, hard face of the wide sea of stone.

There was not a moment to lose. Jason lifted Sunlocks to his shoulder and crept along, bent nearly double, as silently and swiftly as he could go. And still behind him was the whoop of the men, the barking of the dogs and the clatter of hoofs.

On and on he went, minute after precious minute. The ground became heavier at every stride with huge stones that tore his stockinged legs and mangled his feet in his thin skin-shoes. But he recked nothing of this, or rejoiced in it, for the way was as rough for the guards behind him, and he could hear that the horses had been drawn up from their gallop to a slow-paced walk. At each step he scoured the bleak plain for shelter, and at length he saw among piles of vitreous snags a hummock of great slabs clashed together, with one side rent open. It was like nothing else on earth but a tomb in an old burial-ground, where the vaults have fallen in and wrecked the monuments above them. Through the cankered lips of this hummock into its gaping throat, Jason pushed the unconscious body of Sunlocks, and crept in after it. And lying there in the gloom he waited for the guards to come on, and as they came he strained his ear to catch the sound of the words that passed between them.

"No, no, we're on the right course," said one voice. How hollow and far away it sounded! "You saw his footmarks on the moss that we've just crossed over, and you'll see them again on the clay we're coming to."

"You're wrong," said another voice, "we saw one man's footsteps only, and we are following two."

"Don't I tell you the red man is carrying the other."

"All these miles? Impossible! Anyhow *that's* their course, not *this*."

"Why so?"

"Because they're bound for Hafnafiord."

"Why Hafnafiord?"

"To take ship and clear away."

"Tut, man, they've got bigger game than that. They're going to Reykjavik."

"What! To run into the lion's mouth?"

"Yes, and to draw his teeth, too. What has the Captain always said? Why, that the red man has all along been spy for the fair one, and we know who *he* is. Let him once set foot in Reykjavik and he'll do over again what he did before."

Crouching over Sunlocks in the darkness of that grim vault, Jason heard these words as the guards rode past him in the glare of the hot sun, and not until they were gone did he draw his breath. But just as he lay back with a sigh of relief, thinking all danger over, suddenly he heard a sound that startled him. It was the sniffing of a dog outside his hiding place, and at the next instant two glittering eyes looked in upon him from the gap whereby he had entered.

The dog growled, and Jason tried to pacify it. It barked, and then Jason laid hold of it, and gripped it about the throat to silence it. It fumed and fought, but Jason held it like a vise, until there came a whistle and a call, and then it struggled afresh.

"Erik!" shouted a voice without. "Erik, Erik!" and then whistle followed whistle.

Thinking the creature would now follow its master, Jason was for releasing it, but before he had yet fully done so the dog growled and barked again.

"Erik! Erik!" shouted the voice outside, and from the click-clack of hoofs Jason judged that one of the men was returning for the dog.

Then Jason saw that there was nothing left to him but to quiet the dog, or it would betray them to their death; so, while the brute writhed in his great hands, struggling to tear the flesh from them, he laid hold of its gaping jaws and rived them apart and broke them. In a moment more the dog was dead.

In the silence that followed, a faint voice came from a distance, crying, "Sigurd, Sigurd, why are you waiting?"

And then another voice shouted back from near at hand—very near, so near as to seem to be on top of the hummock, "I've lost the dog; and I could swear I heard him growling somewhere hereabouts not a minute since."

Jason was holding his breath again, when suddenly a deep sigh came from Sunlocks; then another, and another, and then some rambling words that had no meaning, but made a dull hum in that

hollow place. The man outside must have heard something, for he called his dog again.

At that Jason's heart fell low, and all he could do he did—he reached over the outstretched form of his comrade, and put his lips to the lips of Sunlocks, just that he might smother their deadly babble with noiseless kisses.

This must have served, for when the voice that was far away shouted again "Sigurd! Sigurd!" the voice that was near at hand answered, "Coming." And a moment later, Jason heard the sounds of hoofs going off from him as before.

Then Michael Sunlocks awoke to full consciousness, and realized his state, and what had befallen him, and where he was, and who was with him. And first he was overwhelmed by a tempest of agony at feeling that he was a lost and forlorn man, blind and maimed, as it seemed at that time, for all the rest of his life to come. After that he cried for water, saying that his throat was baked and his tongue cracked, and Jason replied that all the water they had found that day they had been forced to leave behind them where they could never return to it. Then he poured out a torrent of hot reproaches, calling on Jason to say why he had been brought out there to go mad of thirst; and Jason listened to all and made no answer, but stood with bent head, and quivering lips, and great tear-drops on his rugged cheeks.

The spasm of agony and anger soon passed, as Jason knew it must, and then, full of remorse, Sunlocks saw everything in a new light.

"What time of day is it?" he asked.

"Evening," said Jason.

"How many hours since we left Krisuvik?"

"Ten."

"How many miles from there?"

"Twenty."

"Have you carried me all the way?"

"Yes."

There was a moment's pause, then an audible sob, and then Sunlocks felt for Jason's hand and drew it down to his lips. That kiss was more than Jason could bear, though he bore the hot words well enough; so he made a brave show of unconcern, and rattled on with hopeful talk, saying where they were to go, and what he was to do for both of them, and how they would be free men tomorrow.

And as he talked of the great task that was before them, his heart grew strong again, and Sunlocks caught the contagion of

his spirit and cried, "Yes, yes, let us set off." I can walk alone now. Come, let us go."

At that Jason drew Sunlocks out of the hummock, and helped him to his feet.

"You are weak still," he said. "Let me carry you again."

"No, no, I am strong. Give me your hand. That's enough," said Sunlocks.

"Come, then," said Jason, "the guards have gone that way to Reykjavik. It's this way to Thingvellir—over the hill yonder, and through the chasm of All Men, and down by the lake to the Mount of Laws."

Then Jason wound his right arm about the waist of Sunlocks, and Sunlocks rested his left hand on the shoulder of Jason, and so they started out again over that gaunt wilderness that was once a sea of living fire. Bravely they struggled along, with words of courage and good cheer passing between them, and Sunlocks tried to be strong for Jason's sake, and Jason tried to be blind for sake of Sunlocks. If Sunlocks stumbled, Jason pretended not to know it, though his strong arm bore him up, and when Jason spoke of water and said they would soon come to a whole lake of it, Sunlocks pretended that he was no longer thirsty. Thus, like little children playing at make-believe, they tottered on, side by side, arm through arm, yoked together by a bond far tighter than ever bound them before, for the love that was their weakness was God's own strength.

But no power of spirit could take the place of power of body, and Sunlocks grew faint and very feeble.

"Is the sun still shining?" he asked at one time.

"Yes," said Jason.

Whereupon Sunlocks added, sadly, "And I am blind—blind—blind."

"Courage," whispered Jason, "the lake is yonder. I can see it plainly. We'll have water soon."

"It's not that," said Sunlocks, "but something else that troubles me."

"What else?" said Jason.

"That I'm blind, and sick, and have a broken hand, a broken heart, and a broken brain, and am not worth saving."

"Lean heavier on my shoulder and wind your arm about my neck," whispered Jason.

Sunlocks struggled on a little longer, and then the power of life fell low in him, and he could walk no farther. "Let me go," he said, "I will lie down here a while."

And when Jason had dropped him gently to the ground, thinking he meant to rest a little and then continue his journey, Sunlocks said, very gently:

"Now, save yourself. I am only a burden to you. Escape, or you will be captured and taken back."

"What?" cried Jason, "and leave you here to die?"

"That may be my fate in any case," said Sunlocks faintly, "so go, brother—go—farewell—and God bless you!"

"Courage," whispered Jason again. "I know a farm not far away, and the good man that keeps it. He will give us milk and bread; and we'll sleep under his roof to-night, and start afresh in the morning."

But the passionate voice fell on a deaf ear, for Sunlocks was unconscious before half the words were spoken. Then Jason lifted him to his shoulder once more, and set out for the third time over the rocky waste.

It would be a weary task to tell of the adventures that afterward befell him. In the fading sunlight of that day he crossed trackless places, void of any sound or sight of life; silent, save for the hoarse croak of the raven; without sign of human foregoer, except some pyramidal heaps of stones, that once served as mournful sentinels to point the human scapegoat to the cities of refuge.

He came up to the lake and saw that it was poisonous, for the plovers that flew over it fell dead from its fumes; and when he reached the farm he found it a ruin, the good farmer gone, and his hearth cold. He toiled through mud and boggy places, and crossed narrow bridle paths along perpendicular sides of precipices. The night came on as he walked, the short night of that northern summer, where the sun never sets in blessed darkness that weary eyes may close in sleep, but a blood-red glow burns an hour in the northern sky at midnight, and then the bright light rises again over the unrested world. He was faint for bread, and athirst for water, but still he struggled on—on—on—on—over the dismal chaos.

Sometimes when the pang of thirst was strongest he remembered what he had heard of the madness that comes of it—that the afflicted man walks round in a narrow circle, round and round over the self-same place (as if the devil's bridle bound him like an unbroken horse) until nature fails and he faints and falls. Yet thinking of himself so, in that weary spot, with Sunlocks over him, he shuddered, but took heart of strength and struggled on.

And all this time Sunlocks lay inert and lifeless on his shoulder,

in a deep unconsciousness that was broken by two moments only of complete sensibility. In the first of these he said:

"I must have been dreaming, for I thought I had found my brother."

"Your brother?" said Jason.

"Yes, my brother; for I have got one, though I have never seen him," said Sunlocks. "We were not together in childhood, as other brothers are, but when we grew to be men I set out in search of him. I thought I had found him at last—but it was in hell."

"God-a-mercy!" cried Jason.

"And when I looked at him," said Sunlocks, "it seemed to me that he was you. Yes, you; for he had the face of my yoke-fellow at the mines. I thought you were my brother indeed."

"Lie still, brother," whispered Jason; "lie still and rest."

In the second moment of his consciousness Sunlocks said, "Do you think the judges will listen to us?"

"They must—they shall," said Jason.

"But the Governor himself may be one of them," said Sunlocks.

"What matter?" said Jason.

"He is a hard man—do you know who he is?"

"No," said Jason; but he added, quickly, "Wait! Ah, now I remember. Will he be there?"

"Yes."

"So much the better."

"Why?" said Sunlocks.

And Jason answered, with heat and flame of voice, "Because I hate and loathe him."

"Has he wronged you also?" said Sunlocks.

"Yes," said Jason, "and I have waited and watched five years to requite him."

"Have you never yet met with him?"

"Never! But I'll see him now. And if he denies me this justice, I'll—"

"What?"

At that he paused, and then said quickly, "No matter."

But Sunlocks understood and said, "God forbid it."

Half an hour later, Red Jason, still carrying Michael Sunlocks, was passing through the chasm of All Men, a grand, gloomy diabolical fissure opening into the valley of Thingvellir. It was morning of the day following his escape from the Sulphur Mines of Krisuvik. The air was clear, the sun was bright, and a dull

sound, such as the sea makes when far away, came up from the plain below. It was a deep multitudinous hum of many voices. Jason heard it, and his heavy face lightened with the vividness of a grim joy.

CHAPTER V

THE MOUNT OF LAWS

I

And now, that we may stride on the faster, we must step back a pace or two. What happened to Greeba after she parted from her father at Krisuvik, and took up her employment as nurse to the sick prisoners, we partly know already from the history of Red Jason and Michael Sunlocks. Accused of unchastity, she was turned away from the hospital; and suspected of collusion to effect the escape of some prisoner unrecognized, she was ordered to leave the neighborhood of the Sulphur Mines. But where her affections are at stake a woman's wit is more than a match for a man's cunning, and Greeba contrived to remain at Krisuvik. For her material she still had the larger part of the money that her brothers, in their scheming selfishness, had brought her, and she had her child to cheer her solitude. It was a boy, unchristened as yet, save in the secret place of her heart, where it bore a name that she dared not speak. And if its life was her shame in the eyes of the good folk who gave her shelter, it was a dear and sweet dishonor, for well she knew and loved to remember that one word from her would turn it to glory and to joy.

"If only I dare tell," she would whisper into her babe's ear again and again. "If I only dare!"

But its father's name she never uttered, and so with pride for her secret, and honor for her disgrace, she clung the closer to both, though they were sometimes hard to bear, and she thought a thousand times they were a loving and true revenge on him that had doubted her love and told her she had married him for the poor glory of his place.

Not daring to let herself be seen within range of the Sulphur Mines, she sought out the prisoner-priest from time to time, where he lived in the partial liberty of the Free Command, and learned from him such tidings of her husband as came his way. The good man knew nothing of the identity of Michael Sunlocks in that world of bondage where all identity was lost, save that A25 was the husband of the woman who waited without. But that was Greeba's sole secret, and the true soul kept it.

And so the long winter passed, and the summer came, and Greeba was content to live by the side of Sunlocks, content to breathe the air he breathed, to have the same sky above her, to share the same sunshine and the same rain, only repining when she remembered that while she was looking for love into the eyes of their child, he was slaving like a beast of burden; but waiting, waiting, waiting, withal for the chance—she knew not what—that must release him yet, she knew not when.

Her great hour came at length, but an awful blow came with it. One day the prisoner-priest hurried up to the farm where she lived, and said, "I have sad news for you; forgive me; prisoner A25 has met with an accident."

She did not stay to hear more, but with her child in her arms she hurried away to the Mines, and there in the tempest of her trouble the secret of months went to the winds in an instant.

"Where is he?" she cried. "Let me see him. He is my husband."

"Your husband!" said the warders, and without more ado they laid hands upon her and carried her off to their Captain.

"This woman," they said, "turns out to be the wife of A25,"

"As I suspected," the Captain answered.

"Where is my husband?" Greeba cried. "What accident has befallen him? Take me to him."

"First tell me why you came to this place," said the Captain.

"To be near my husband," said Greeba.

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing."

"Who is this other man?" said the Captain.

"What man?" said Greeba.

Then they told her that her husband was gone, having been carried off by a fellow-prisoner who had effected the escape of both of them.

"Escaped!" cried Greeba, with a look of bewilderment, glancing from face to face of the men about her. "Then it is not true that he has met with an accident. Thank God, oh! thank God!" And she clutched her child closer to her breast, and kissed it.

"We know nothing of that either way," said the Captain. "But tell us who and what is this other man? His number here was B25. His name is Jason."

At that, Greeba gazed up again with a terrified look of inquiry.

"Jason?" she cried.

"Yes, who is he?" the Captain asked.

And Greeba answered, after a pause, "His own brother."

"We might have thought as much," said the Captain.

There was another pause, and then Greeba said, "Yes, his own brother, who has followed him all his life to kill him."

The Captain smiled upon his warders and said, "It didn't look like it, madam."

"But it is true," said Greeba.

"He has been your husband's best friend," said the Captain.

"He is my husband's worst enemy," said Greeba.

"He has carried him off, I tell you," said the Captain.

"Then it is only that he may have his wicked will of him," said Greeba. "Ah, sir, you will tell me I don't know what I'm saying. But I know too well. It was for attempting my husband's life that Jason was sent to this place. That was before your time; but look and see if I speak the truth. Now I know it is false that my husband is only injured. Would he were! Would he were! Yet, what am I saying? Mercy me, what am I saying? But, only think, he has been carried off to his death. I know he has—I am sure he has; and better, a thousand thousand times better that he should be here, however injured, with me to nurse him! But what am I saying again? Indeed, I don't know what I am saying. Oh, sir, forgive me; and heaven forgive me, also. But send after that man. Send instantly. Don't lose an hour more. Oh, believe me, sir, trust me, sir, for I am a broken-hearted woman; and why should I not speak the truth?"

"All this is very strange," said the Captain. "But set your mind at ease about the man Jason. The guards have already gone in pursuit of him, and he can not escape. It is not for me to say your story is not true, though the facts, as we know them, discredit it. But, true or not, you shall tell it to the Governor as you have told it to me, so prepare to leave Krisuvik immediately."

And in less than an hour more Greeba was riding between two of the guards toward the valley of Thingvellir.

II

Jorgen Jorgensen had thrice hardened his heart against Michael Sunlocks: first, when he pushed Sunlocks into the Althing, and found his selfish ends were not thereby in the way of advancement; next, when he fell from his place and Sunlocks took possession of it; again, when he regained his stool and Sunlocks was condemned to the Sulphur Mines. But most of all he hated Sunlocks when old Adam Fairbrother came to Reykjavik and demanded for him, as an English subject, the benefit of judge and jury.

"We know of no jury here," said Jorgen; "and English subject or not English subject, this man has offended against the laws of Denmark."

"Then the laws of Denmark shall condemn him," said Adam, bravely, "and not the caprice of a tyrant governor."

"Keep a civil tongue in your old head, sir," said Jorgen, "or you may learn to your cost how far that caprice can go."

"I care nothing for your threats, sir," said Adam, "and I mean to accuse you before your master."

"Do your worst," said Jorgen, "and take care how you do it."

And at first Adam's worst seemed likely to be little, for hardly had he set foot in Reykjavik when he was brought front to front with the material difficulty that the few pounds with which he had set out were spent. Money was justice, and justice money, on that rock of the sea, as elsewhere, and on the horns of his dilemma Adam bethought him to write to his late master, the Duke of Athol, explaining his position, and asking for the loan of fifty pounds. A long month passed before he got back his answer. The old Duke sent forty pounds as a remonstrance against Adam's improvidence, and stern counsel to him to return forthwith to the homes of his children. In the meantime the old Bishop, out of love of Michael Sunlocks and sympathy with Greeba, had taken Adam into his house at Reykjavik. From there old Adam had sent petitions to the Minister at Copenhagen, petitions to the Danish Rigsdag, and finally petitions to the Danish King. His reward had been small, for no justice, or promise of justice, could he get.

But Jorgen Jorgensen had sat no easier on his seat for Adam's zealous efforts. He had been harried out of his peace by Government inquiries, and terrified by Government threats. But he had wriggled, he had lied, he had used subterfuge after subterfuge, and so pushed on the evil day of final reckoning.

And while his hoary head lay ill at ease because of the troubles that came from Copenhagen, the gorge of his stomach rose at the bitter waters he was made to drink at Reykjavik. He heard the name of Michael Sunlocks on every lip, as a name of honor, a name of affection, a name to conjure with whenever and wherever men talked of high talents, justice, honor, and truth.

Jorgen perceived that the people of Iceland had recovered from the first surprise and suspicion that followed on the fall of their Republic, and no longer saw Michael Sunlocks as their betrayer, but had begun to regard him as their martyr. They loved him still. If their hour ever came they would restore him. On the other hand, Jorgen realized that he himself was hated where he

was not despised, jeered at where he was not feared, and that the men whom he had counted upon because he had bought them with the places in his gift, smiled loftily upon him as upon one who had fallen on his second childhood. And so Jorgen Jorgensen hardened his heart against Michael Sunlocks, and vowed that the Sulphur Mines of Krisuvik should see the worst and last of him.

He heard of Jason, too, that he was not dead, as they had supposed, but alive, and that he had been sent to the Mines for attempting the life of Sunlocks. That attempt seemed to him to come of a natural passion, and as often as he spoke of it he warmed up visibly, not out of any human tenderness toward Jason, but with a sense of wild triumph over Sunlocks. And the more he thought of Jason, the firmer grew his resolve to take him out of the Sulphur Mines and place him by his side, not that his old age needed a stay, not that he was a lonely old man, and Jason was his daughter's son, but only because Jason hated Sunlocks and would crush him if by chance he rose again.

With such thoughts uppermost he went down to Krisuvik, and there his bitter purpose met with a shock. He found Jason the sole ally of Michael Sunlocks, his friend, his defender and champion against tyranny. It was then that he ordered the ruthless punishment of Sunlocks, that he should be nailed by his right hand to a log of driftwood, with meat and drink within sight but out of reach of him, and a huge knife by his side. And when Jason had liberated Sunlocks from this inhuman cruelty, and the two men, dearest foes and deadliest friends, were brought before him for their punishment, the gall of Jorgen's fate seemed to suffocate him. "Strap them up together," he cried, "leg to leg and arm to arm." Thus he thought to turn their love to hate; but he kept his own counsel, and left the Sulphur Mines without saying what evil dream had brought him there, or confessing to his Danish officers the relation wherein this other prisoner stood to him, for secrecy is the chain-armor of the tyrant.

Back in Reykjavik he comforted himself with the assurance that Michael Sunlocks must die. "There was death in his face," he thought, "and he can not last a month longer. Besides, he will fall to fighting with the other, and the other will surely kill him. Blind fools, both of them!"

In this mood he made ready for Thingvellir, and set out with all his people. Since the revolution, he had kept a bodyguard of five-and-twenty men, and with this following he was crossing the slope of the Basket Hill, behind the capital, when he saw half a score of the guards from Krisuvik riding at a gallop from the

direction of Hafnafiord. They were the men who had been sent in pursuit of Red Jason and Michael Sunlocks, the same that had passed them in the hummock, where the carcass of the dog still lay.

Then Jorgen Jorgensen received news that terrified him.

Michael Sunlocks had escaped, and Red Jason had escaped with him. They had not been seen at Hafnafiord, and no ship had set sail from there since yesterday. Never a trace of them had been found on any of the paths from Krisuvik, and it was certain that they must be in the interior still. Would his Excellency lend them ten men more to scour the country?

Such was the message of the guards, and at hearing it Jorgen's anger and fear overmastered him.

"Fools! Blockheads! Asses!" he cried. "The man is making for Reykjavik. He knows what he is doing if you do not. Is not this the time of the Althing, and must I not leave Reykjavik for Thingvellir? He is making for Reykjavik now! Once let him set foot there, and these damned Icelanders will rise at the sight of him. Then you may scour the country till you fall dead and turn black, and he will only laugh at the sight of you. Back, you blockheads, back! Back to Reykjavik, every man of you! And I am going back with you."

Thus driven by his frantic terror, Jorgen Jorgensen returned to the capital and searched every house and hovel, every hole and sty, for the two fugitives; and when he had satisfied himself that they were not anywhere within range of Reykjavik, his fears remembered Thingvellir, and what mischief might be going forward in his absence. So next day he left his bodyguard with the guard from Krisuvik to watch the capital, and set out alone for the Mount of Laws.

III

The lonely valley of Thingvellir was alive that morning with a great throng of people. They came from the west by the Chasm of All Men, from the east by the Chasm of Ravens, and from the south by the lake. Troop after troop flowed into the vast amphitheatre that lies between dark hills and great jokulls tipped with snow. They pitched their tents on the green patch, under the fells to the north, and tying their ponies together, head to tail, they turned them loose to graze. Hundreds of tents were there by early morning, gleaming white in the sunlight, and tens of hundreds of ponies, shaggy and unkempt, grubbed among the short grass that grew between.

Near the middle of the plain stood the Mount of Laws, a lava

island of oval shape, surrounded by a narrow stream, and bounded by overhanging walls cut deep with fissures. Around this mount the people gathered. There friend met friend, foe met foe, rival met rival, northmen met southmen, the Westmann islander met the Grimsey islander, and the man from Seydisfiord met the man from Patriksfiord. And because the Althing gathered only every other year, many musty kisses went round, with snuff-boxes after them, among those who had not met before for two long years.

It was a vast assembly, chiefly of men, in their homespun and sheepskins and woolen stockings, cross-gartered with hemp from ankle to knee. Women, too, and young girls and children were there, all wearing their Sunday best. And in those first minutes of their meeting, before the Althing began, the talk was of crops and stock, of the weather, and what sheep had been lost in the last two hard winters. The day had opened brightly, with clear air and bright sunshine, but the blue sky had soon become overcast with threatening clouds, and this led to stories of strange signs in the heavens, and unaccustomed noises on the earth and under it.

A man from the south spoke of rain of black dust as having fallen three nights before until the ground was covered deep with it. Another man, from the foot of Hekla told of a shock of earthquake that had lately been felt there, traveling northeast to southwest. A third man spoke of grazing his horse on the wild oats of a glen that he had passed through, when a line of some twenty columns of smoke burst suddenly upon his view. All this seemed to pass from lip to lip in the twinkling of an eye, and when young men asked what the signs might mean, old men lifted both hands and shook their heads, and prayed that the visitations which their island had seen before might never come to it again.

Such was the talk, and such the mood of the people when the hour arrived for the business of the Althing to begin, and then all eyes turned to the little wooden Thing House by the side of the church, wherein the Thing-men were wont to gather for their procession to the Mount of Laws. And when the hour passed, and the procession had not yet appeared, the whisper went around that the Governor had not arrived, and that the delay was meant to humor him. At that the people began to mutter among themselves, for the slumbering fire of their national spirit had been stirred. By his tardy coming the Governor meant to humiliate them! But, Governor or no Goverenor, let the Althing begin its sitting. Who was the Governor, that the Althing should wait for him? What was the Althing that it should submit to the whim or the will of any Governor?

Within the Thing House, as well as outside of it, such hot protests must have had sway, for presently the door of the little place was thrown open and the six and thirty Thing-men came out.

Then followed the solemn ceremonies that had been observed on the spot for nigh a thousand years. First walked the Chief Judge, carrying the sword of justice, and behind him walked his magistrates and Thing-men. They ascended to the Mount by a flight of steps cut out of its overhanging walls. At the same moment another procession, that of the old Bishop and his clergy, came out of the church and ascended to the Mount by a similar flight of steps cut out of the opposite side of it. The two companies parted, the Thing-men to the north and the clergy to the south, leaving the line of this natural causeway open and free, save for the Judge, who stood at the head of it, with the Bishop to the right of him and the Governor's empty place to the left.

And first the Bishop offered prayer for the sitting of the Althing that was then to begin.

"Thou Judge of Israel," he prayed, in the terrible words which had descended to him through centuries, "Thou that sittest upon the cherubims, come down and help Thy people. O, most mighty God, who art more pleased with the sacrifice of thanksgiving than with the burnt offerings of bullocks and goats, keep now our mouths from guile and deceit, from slander and from obloquy. O Lord God most holy, O Lord most mighty, endue Thy ministers with righteousness. Give them wisdom that they may judge wisely. Give them mercy that they may judge mercifully. Let them judge this nation as Thou wilt judge Thy people. Let them remember that he who takes the name of justice for his own profit or hatred or revenge is worse than the vulture that watches for the carcass. Let them not forget that howsoever high they stand or proudly they bear themselves, nothing shall they take from hence but the oak for their coffin. Let them be sure that when Thou shalt appear with a consuming fire before Thee and a tempest round about Thee, calling the heaven and the earth together, no portion can they have in that day like to the portion of Thine inheritance."

The fierce prayer came to an end, and then the Judge, holding his sword erect, read his charge and repeated his oath, to deal justly between man and man, even as the sword stood upright before him. And the vast assembly of rude men in sheepskins and in homespun looked on and listened, all silent and solemn, all worshipful of law and reverent of its forms.

The oath being taken, the Judge had laid the sword aside and begun to promulgate the new laws, reading them clause by clause,

first in Icelandic and then in Danish, when there was an uneasy movement at the outskirts of the crowd to the west of the Mount.

"The Governor," whispered one. "It's himself," muttered another. "He's here at last," murmured a third, and dark were the faces turned round to see. It was the Governor, indeed, and he pushed his way through the closely packed people, who saw him coming, but stood together like a wall until riven apart by his pony's feet. At the causeway he dismounted and stepped up to the top of the Mount. He looked old and feeble and torn by evil passions; his straight gray hair hung like a blasted sheaf on to his shoulders, his forehead was blistered with blue veins, his cheeks were guttered with wrinkles, his little eyes were cruel, his jaw was broad and heavy, and his mouth was hard and square.

The Judge made him no obeisance, but went on with his reading. The Bishop seemed not to see him, but gazed steadfastly forward. The Thing-men gave no sign.

He stood a moment, and looked around, and the people below could see his wrath rising like a white hand across his haggard face. Then he interrupted and said, "Chief Justice, I have something to say."

All heard the words, and the Speaker stopped, and, amid the breathless silence of the people, he answered quietly: "There will be a time and a place for that, your Excellency."

"The time is now, and the place is here," cried Jorgen Jorgensen, in a tense voice, and quivering with anger. "Listen to me. The rebel and traitor who once usurped the government of this island has escaped."

"Escaped!" cried a hundred voices.

"Michael Sunlocks!" cried as many more.

And a wave of excitement passed over the vast assembly.

"Yes, Michael Sunlocks has escaped," cried Jorgen Jorgensen. "That scoundrel is at liberty. He is free to do his wicked work again. Men of Iceland, I call on you to help me. I call on you to help the Crown of Denmark. The traitor must be taken. I call on you to take him."

A deep murmur ran through the closely pressed people.

"You've got your guards," shouted a voice from below. "Why do you come to us?"

"Because," cried Jorgen Jorgensen, "my guards are protecting Reykjavik, and because they might scour your island a hundred years and never find what they looked for."

"Thank God!" muttered another voice from below.

"But you know it, every fell and fiord," cried Jorgen Jorgensen,

"and never a toad could skulk under a stone but you would root him out of it. Chief Justice," he added, sweeping about, "I have a request to make of you."

"What is it, your Excellency?" said the Judge.

"That you should adjourn this Althing so that every man here present may go out in search of the traitor."

Then a loud involuntary murmur of dissent rose from the people, and at the same moment the Judge said in bewilderment: "What can your Excellency mean?"

"I mean," cried Jorgen Jorgensen, "that if you adjourn this Althing for three days, the traitor will be taken. If not, he will be at liberty as many years. Will you do it?"

"Your Excellency," said the Judge, "the Althing has lived nigh upon a thousand years, and every other year for that thousand years it has met on this ancient ground, but never once since it began has the thing you ask been done."

"Let it be done now," cried Jorgen Jorgensen. "Will you do it?"

"We will do our duty by your Excellency," said the Judge, "and we will expect your Excellency to do your duty by us."

"But this man is a traitor," cried Jorgen Jorgensen, "and it is your duty to help me to capture him. Will you do it?"

"And this day is ours by ancient right and custom," said the Judge, "and it is your duty to stand aside."

"I am here for the King of Denmark," cried Jorgen Jorgensen, "and I ask you to adjourn this Althing. Will you do it?"

"And we are here for the people of Iceland," said the Judge, "and we ask you to step back and let us go on."

Then Jorgen Jorgensen's anger knew no bounds.

"You are subjects of the King of Denmark," he cried.

"Before ever Denmark was, we were," answered the Judge, proudly.

"And in his name I demand that you adjourn. Will you do it now?" cried Jorgen Jorgensen, with a grin of triumph.

"No," cried the Judge, lifting an undaunted face to the face of Jorgen Jorgensen.

The people held their breath through this clash of words, but at the Judge's brave answer a murmur of approval passed over them. Jorgen Jorgensen heard it, and flinched, but turned back to the Judge and said:

"Take care. If you do not help me, you hinder me; if you are not with me, you are against me. Is that man a traitor? Answer me—yes or no."

But the Judge made no answer, and there was dead silence among the people, for they knew well in what way the cruel question tended.

"Answer me—yes or no," Jorgen Jorgensen cried again.

Then the Bishop broke silence and said:

"Whatever our hearts may be, your Excellency, our tongues must be silent."

At that, Jorgen Jorgensen faced about to the crowd.

"I put a price on his head," he cried. "Two thousand kroner to any one who takes him, alive or dead. Who will earn it?"

"No Icelander earns money with blood," said the Bishop. "If this thing is our duty, we will do it without pay. If not, no bribe will tempt us."

"Ay, ay," shouted a hundred voices.

Jorgen Jorgensen flinched again, and his face whitened as he grew darker within.

"So, I see how it is," he said, looking steadfastly at the Bishop, the Judge, and the Thing-men. "You are aiding this traitor's escape. You are his allies, every man of you. And you are seducing and deceiving the people."

Then he faced about toward the crowd more and more, and cried in a loud voice:

"Men of Iceland, you know the man who has escaped. You know what he is, and where he came from; you know he is not one of yourselves, but a bastard Englishman. Then drive him back home. Listen to me. What price did I put on his head? Two thousand kroner! I will give ten thousand! Ten thousand kroner for the man who takes him alive, and twenty thousand kroner—do you hear me?—twenty thousand for the man who takes him dead."

"Silence!" cried the Bishop. "Who are you, sir, that you dare tempt men to murder?"

"Murder!" cried Jorgen Jorgensen. "See how simple are the wise? Men of Iceland, listen to me again. The traitor is an outlaw. You know what that means. His blood is on his own head. Any man may shoot him down. No man may be called to account for doing so. Do you hear me? It is the law of Iceland, the law of Denmark, the law of the world. He is an outlaw, and killing him is no murder. Follow him up! Twenty thousand kroner to the man who lays him at my feet."

He would have said more, for he was heaving with passion, and his white face had grown purple, but his tongue seemed suddenly paralyzed, and his wide eyes fixed themselves on something

at the outskirts of the crowd. One thin and wrinkled hand he lifted up and pointed tremblingly over the heads of the people. "There!" he said in a smothered cry, and after that he was silent.

The crowd shifted and looked round, amid a deep murmur of surprise and expectation. Then by one of the involuntary impulses that move great assemblies, the solid wall of human beings seemed to part of itself, and make way for some one.

It was Red Jason, carrying Michael Sunlocks across his breast and shoulder. His bronzed cheeks were worn, his sunken eyes burned with a dull fire. He strode on, erect and strong, through the riven men and women. A breathless silence seemed to follow him. When he came to the foot of the Mount, he stopped, and let Sunlocks drop gently to the ground. Sunlocks was insensible, and his piteous white face looked up at the heavy dome of the sky. A sensation of awe held the vast crowd spellbound. It was as if the Almighty God had heard the blasphemy of that miserable old man, and given him on the instant his impious wish.

IV

Then, in that breathless silence, Jason stood erect and said, in a firm, clear, sonorous voice, "You know who I am. Some of you hate me. Some of you fear me. All of you think me a sort of wild beast among men. That is why you caged me. But I have broken my bars, and brought this man along with me."

The men on the Mount had not time to breathe under the light and fire that flashed upon them when Jason lifted his clenched hand and said: "O, you that dwell in peace; you that go to your beds at night; you that eat when you are hungry and drink when you are athirst, and rest when you are weary: would to God you could know by bitter proof what this poor man has suffered. But *I* know it, and I can tell you what it has been. Where is your Michael Sunlocks, that I may tell it to him? Which is he? Point him out to me."

Then the people drew a deep breath, for they saw in an instant what had befallen these two men in the dread shaping of their fate.

"Where is he?" cried Jason, again.

And in a voice quivering with emotion, the Judge said:

"Don't you know the man you've brought here?"

"No—yes—yes," cried Jason. "My brother—my brother in suffering—my brother in misery—that's all I know or care. But

where is your Michael Sunlocks? I have something to say to him. Where is he?"

Jorgen Jorgensen had recovered himself by this time, and pressing forward, he said with a cruel smile:

"You fool; shall I tell you where he is?"

"Heaven forbid it!" said the Bishop, stepping out and lifting both hands before the Governor's face. But in that instant Jason had recognized Jorgen Jorgensen.

"I know this old man," he said. "What is he doing here? Ah, God pity me, I had forgotten. I saw him at the mines. Then he is back. And, now I remember, he is Governor again."

Saying this, an agony of bewilderment quivered in his face. He looked around.

"Then where is Michael Sunlocks?" he cried in a loud voice. "Where is he? Which is he? Who is he? Will no one tell me? Speak! For the merciful Christ's sake let some one speak."

There was a moment of silence, in which the vast crowd trembled as one man with wonder and dismay. The Bishop and Judge stood motionless. Jorgen Jorgensen smiled bitterly and shook his head, and Jason raised his right hand to cover his face from the face of the insensible man at his feet, as if some dark foreshadowing of the truth had swept over him in an instant.

What happened thereafter Jason never knew, only that there was a shrill cry and a rustle like a swirl of wind, only that some one was coming up behind him through the walls of human beings, that still stood apart like riven rocks, only that in a moment a woman had flung herself over the prostrate body of his comrade, embracing it, raising it in her arms, kissing its pale cheeks, and sobbing over it, "My husband! my husband."

It was Greeba. When the dark mist had cleared away from before his eyes, Jason saw her and knew her. At the same instant he saw and knew his destiny, that his yoke-fellow had been Michael Sunlocks, that his lifelong enemy had been his life's sole friend.

It was a terrible discovery, and Jason reeled under the shock of it like a beast that is smitten to its death. And while he stood there, half-blind, half-deaf, swaying to and fro as if the earth rocked beneath him, across his shoulders, over his cheeks and his mouth and his eyes fell the lash of the tongue of Jorgen Jorgensen.

"Yes, fool that you are and have been," he cried in his husky voice, "that's where your Michael Sunlocks is."

"Shame! Shame!" cried the people.

But Jorgen Jorgensen showed no pity or ruth.

"You have brought him here to your confusion," he cried again, "and it's not the first time you've taken his part to your own loss."

More he would have said in the merciless cruelty of his heart, only that a deep growl came up from the crowd and silenced him.

But Jason heard nothing, saw nothing, felt nothing, knew nothing, save that Michael Sunlocks lay at his feet, that Greeba knelt beside him, and that she was coaxing him, caressing him, and kissing him back to life.

"Michael," she whispered, "Michael! My poor Michael!" she murmured, while she moistened his lips and parched tongue with the brenni-vin from the horn of some good man standing near.

Jason saw this and heard this, though he had eyes and ears for nothing besides. And thinking, in the wild tumult of his distempered brain, that such tenderness might have been his, should have been his, must have been his, but for this man who had robbed him of this woman, all the bitterness of his poisoned heart rose up to choke him.

He remembered his weary life with this man, his sufferings with him, his love for him, and he hated himself for it all. What devil of hell had made sport of him, to give him his enemy for his friend? How Satan himself must shriek aloud to see it, that he who had been thrice robbed by this man—robbed of a father, robbed of a mother, robbed of a wife—should in his blindness tend him, and nurse him, and carry him with sweat of blood over trackless wastes that he might save him alive for her who waited to claim him!

Then he remembered what he had come for, and that all was not yet done. Should he do it after all? Should he give this man back to this woman? Should he renounce his love and his hate together—his love of this woman, his hate of this man? Love? Hate? Which was love? Which was hate? Ah, God! They were one; they were the same. Heaven pity him, what was he to do?

Thus the powers of good and the powers of evil wrestled together in Jason's heart for mastery. But the moment of their struggle was short. One look at the piteous blind face lying on Greeba's bosom, one glance at the more piteous wet face that hung over it, and love had conquered hate in that big heart forever and forever.

Jason was recalled to himself by a dull hum of words that seemed to be spoken from the Mount. Some one was asking why he had come there, and brought Michael Sunlocks along with him.

So he lifted his hand, partly to call attention, partly to steady himself, and in a broken voice he said these words:

"Men and women, if you could only know what it means that you have just witnessed, I think it would be enough to move any men. You know what I am—a sort of bastard who has never been a man among men, but has walked alone all the days of his life. My father killed my mother, and so I vowed to kill my father. I did not do it, for I saved him out of the sea, and he died in my arms, as you might say, doting on the memory of another son. That son's mother had supplanted my mother and that son himself had supplanted me, so I vowed to kill him for his father's sake. I did not do that either. I had never once set eyes on my enemy, I had done nothing but say what I meant to do, when you took me and tried me and condemned me. Perhaps that was injustice, such as could have been met with nowhere save here in Iceland, yet I thank God for it now. By what chance I do not know, but in that hell to which you sent me, where all names are lost and no man may know his yoke-fellow, except by his face if he has seen it, I met with one who became my friend, my brother, my second self. I loved him, as one might love a little child. And he loved me—yes, me—I could swear it. You had thought me a beast, and shut me out from the light of day and the company of Christian men. But he made me a man, and lighted up the darkness of my night."

His deep strong voice faltered, and he stopped, and nothing was audible save the excited breathing of the people. Greeba was looking up into his haggard face with amazement written upon her own.

"Must I go on?" he cried, in a voice rent with agony. "I have brought him here, and he is Michael Sunlocks. My brother in suffering is my brother in blood. The man I have vowed to slay is the man I have tried to save."

Some of the people could not restrain their tears, and the white faces of the others quivered visibly.

"Why have you brought him here?" asked the Judge.

At that moment Michael Sunlocks began to move and to moan, as if consciousness were coming back to him. Jorgen Jorgensen saw this, and the proud composure with which he had looked on and listened while Sunlocks lay like a man dead left him in an instant.

"Why have you brought Michael Sunlocks here?" said the Judge again.

"Why has he brought him here?" said Jorgen Jorgensen bit-

terly. "To be arrested. That's why he has brought him here. See, the man is coming to. He will do more mischief yet, unless he is prevented. Take him," he shouted to two of the guards from Krisuvik, who had come with Greeba, and now stood behind her.

"Wait!" cried the Judge, lifting his hand.

There was no gainsaying his voice, and the guards who had stepped forward dropped back.

Then he turned to Jason again and repeated his question, "Why have you brought Michael Sunlocks here?"

At that, Jorgen Jorgensen lost all self-control and shouted, "Take him, I say!" And facing about to the Judge he said, "I will have you know, sir, that I am here for Denmark and must be obeyed."

The guards stepped forward again, but the crowd closed around them and pushed them back.

Seeing this, Jorgen Jorgensen grew purple with rage, and turning to the people, he shouted at the full pitch of his voice, "Listen to me. Some minutes past, I put a price on that man's head. I said I would give you twenty thousand kroner. I was wrong. I will give you nothing but your lives and liberty. You know what that means. You have bent your necks under the yoke already, and you may have to do it again. Arrest that man—arrest both men!"

"Stop!" cried the Judge.

"Those men are escaped prisoners," said Jorgen Jorgensen.

"And this is the Mount of Laws, and here is the Althing," said the Judge; "and prisoners or no prisoners, if they have anything to say, by the ancient law of Iceland they may say it now."

"Pshaw! your law of Iceland is nothing to me," said Jorgen Jorgensen, and turning to the crowd he cried, "In the name of the King of Denmark I command you to arrest those men."

"And in the name of the King of Kings," said the Judge, turning after him, "I command you to let them alone."

There was a dead hush for a moment, and then the Judge looked down at Jason and said once more. "Why have you brought Michael Sunlocks here? Speak!"

But before Jason could make answer, Jorgen Jorgensen had broken in again:

"My guards are at Reykjavik," he cried, "and I am here alone. You are traitors, all of you, and if there is no one else to arrest that enemy of my country I will do it myself. He shall go no further. Step back from him."

So saying, he opened his cloak, drew a pistol from his belt and cocked it. A shrill cry arose from the crowd. The men on the

Mount stood quaking with fear, and Greeba flung herself over the restless body of Michael Sunlocks.

But Jason did not move a feature.

"Old man," he said, looking up with eyes as steadfast as the sun into Jorgensen's face, and pointing toward Sunlocks, "if you touch one hair of this head, these hands will tear you to pieces."

Then one of the men who had stood near, a rough fellow with a big tear-drop rolling down his tanned cheeks, stepped up to Jason's side, and without speaking a word offered him his musket; but Jason calmly pushed it back. There was dead silence once more. Jorgen Jorgensen's uplifted hand fell to his side, and he was speechless.

"Speak now," said the Judge. "Why have you brought Michael Sunlocks here?"

Jason stood silent for a moment as if to brace himself up, and then he said, "I have laid my soul bare to your gaze already, and you know what I am and where I come from."

A low moan seemed to echo him.

"But I, too, am an Icelander, and this is our ancient Mount of Laws, the sacred ground of our fathers and our fathers' fathers for a thousand years."

A deep murmur rose from the vast company.

"And I have heard that if any one is wronged and oppressed and unjustly punished, let him but find his way to this place, and though he be the meanest slave that wipes his forehead, yet he will be a man among you all."

There were loud cries of assent.

"I have also heard that this Mount, on this day, is as the gate of the city in old time, when the judges sat to judge the people; and that he who is permitted to set foot on it, and cross it, though he were as guilty as the outlaws that hide in the desert, is innocent and free forever after. Answer me—is it true? Yes or no?"

"Yes! yes!" came from a thousand throats.

"Then, judges of Iceland, fellow-men, and brothers, do you ask why I have brought this man to this place? Look at this bleeding hand." He lifted the right hand of Sunlocks. "It has been pierced with a nail." A deep groan came from the people. He let the hand fall back. "Look at these poor eyes. They are blind. Do you know what that means? It means hellish barbarity and damned tyranny."

His voice swelled until it seemed to shake the very ground on which he stood. "What this man's crime may be I do not know, and I do not care. Let it be what it will, let the man be what he

may—a felon like myself, a malefactor, a miscreant, a monster—yet what crime and what condition deserves punishment that is worse than death and hell?"

"None, none," shouted a thousand voices.

"Then, judges of Iceland, fellow-men, and brothers, I call on you to save this man from that doom. Save him for his sake—save him for your own, for He that dwells above is looking down on you."

He paused a moment and then cried, "Listen!"

There was a low rumble as of thunder. It came not from the clouds, but from the bowels of the earth. The people turned pallid with dismay, but Jason's face was lighted up with a wild frenzy.

"Do you hear it? It is the voice that was heard when these old hills were formed, and the valleys ran like fire. It is the voice of the Almighty God calling on you."

The word was like a war cry. The people answered it with a shout. And still Jason's voice pealed over their heads.

"Vengeance is God's, but mercy belongs to man."

He stooped to Michael Sunlocks, where Greeba held him at her bosom, picked him up in his arms as if he had been a child, turned his face toward the Mount and cried, "Let me pass."

Then at one impulse, in one instant, the Judge and the Bishop parted and made a way, and Jason, carrying Sunlocks, strode up the causeway and swept through.

There was but one voice then in all that great assembly, and it was a mighty shout that seemed to rend the dome of the heavy sky. "Free! Free! Free!"

V

But the end was not yet. More, and more terrible, is to follow, though the spirit is not fain to tell of it, and the hand that sets it down is trembling. Let him who thinks that this world of time is founded in justice wait long and watch patiently, for up to the eleventh hour he may see the good man sit in misery, and the evil man carried in honor. And let him who thinks that Nature is sweet and benignant and that she leaps to the aid of the just, learn from what is to come that she is all things to all men and nothing to any man.

Now when Jason had crossed the Mount of Laws with Sunlocks, thinking that by virtue of old custom he had thereby set him free of tyranny, Jorgen Jorgensen did what a man of shallow soul must always do when he sees the outward signs of the holy things

that move the deeper souls of other men. He smiled with bitterness and laughed with contempt.

"A pretty thing, truly," he sneered, "out of some forgotten age of musty laws and old barbarians. But there is something else that is forgotten. It is forgotten that between these two men, Jason and Michael Sunlocks, there is this difference, that the one is a prisoner of Iceland, and the other of Denmark. Jason is a prisoner of Iceland, a felon of Iceland, therefore Iceland may pardon him, and if this brave mummery has made him free, then so be it, and God pity you! But Michael Sunlocks is a prisoner of Denmark, a traitor against the crown of Denmark, therefore Denmark alone may pardon him—and he is still unpardoned."

The clamorous crowd that had gathered about Michael Sunlocks looked up in silence and bewilderment at this fresh blow. And Jorgen Jorgensen saw his advantage and went on.

"Ask your Lagmann and let him answer you. Is it as I say or is it not? Ask him."

The people looked from face to face of the men on the Mount, from Jorgen Jorgensen to the Judge and from the Judge to the Bishop.

"Is this true?" shouted a voice from the crowd.

But the Judge made no answer, and the Bishop said, "Why all this wrangling over the body of a dying man?"

"Dying indeed!" said Jorgen Jorgensen, and he laughed. "Look at him." Michael Sunlocks, again lying in the arms of Greeba, was showing signs of life. "He will recover fast enough when all is over."

"Is it true?" shouted the same voice from the crowd.

"Yes," said the Judge.

Then the look of bewilderment in the faces of the people deepened to consternation. At that moment Michael Sunlocks was raised to his feet. And Jorgen Jorgensen, standing like an old snuffy tiger on the watch, laughed again, and turning to Jason he pointed at Sunlocks and said, "What did I say? A pretty farce truly, this pretense at unconsciousness. Small good it has done him. And he has little to thank you for. You have brought him here to his death."

What answer Jason would have made him, no man may say, for at that moment the same terrestrial thunder that had been heard before was heard again, and the earth became violently agitated as with a deep pulsation. The people looked into each other's faces with dismay, and scarcely had they realized the horror that waited to pour out on the world, when a man came galloping from

the south and crying, "The mountains are coming down at Skaptar. Fly! fly!"

They stopped the man and questioned him, and he answered, with terror in his eyes, that the ice-mountain itself was sweeping down into the plain. Then he put his heels to his horse and broke away.

Hardly had the people heard this dread word when another man came galloping from the southwest, and crying, "The sea is throwing up new islands at Reykianess, and all the rivers are dry."

They stopped this man also, and questioned him, and he answered that the sky at the coast was raining red-hot stones, so that the sea hissed with them, and all the land was afire. Then he, too, put his heels to his horse and broke away.

Scarcely had he gone, when a third man came galloping from the southeast, and crying, "The land around Hekla is washed away, and not a green place is left on the face of the earth."

This man also they stopped and questioned, and he answered that a torrent of boiling water was rolling down from the Kotlugia jokull, hurling ice-blocks before it, and sweeping farms, churches, cattle, horses, and men, women, and children into the sea. Then this man also put his heels to his horse and broke away, like one pursued by death itself.

For some moments thereafter the people stood where the men had left them, silent, helpless, unable to think or feel. Then there rose from them all, as from one man, such a shriek of mortal agony as never before came from human breasts. In their terror they ran hither and thither, without thought or intention. They took to their tents, they took to their ponies, they galloped north, they galloped south, they galloped east, they galloped west, and then came scurrying back to the Mount from which they had started. A great danger was about to burst upon them, but they could not tell from what direction it would come. Some remembered their homes and the wives and children they had left there. Others thought only of themselves and of the fire and water that were dealing out death.

In two minutes the Mount was a barren waste, the fissures on its sides were empty, and the seats on the crags were bare. The Thing-men and the clergy were rushing to and fro in the throng, and the old Bishop and the Judge were seeking their horses.

Greeba stood, with fear on her face, by the side of Michael Sunlocks, who, blind and maimed, unable to see what was going on about him, not knowing yet where he was and what new evil

threatened him, looked like a man who might have been dead and was awakening to consciousness in a world of the damned.

Two men, and two only, of all that vast multitude, kept their heads and were cool through this mad panic. One of these was Jorgen Jorgensen; the other was Red Jason. They watched each other constantly, the one with the eyes of the lynx, the other with the eyes of a lion.

A troop of men came riding through the throng from the direction of the Chasm of Ravens. Twenty of them were the bodyguard of the Governor, and they pushed their way to the feet of Jorgen Jorgensen.

"Your Excellency," said one of them, "we had news of you that you would want us; so we made bold to come."

"You have come in time," said Jorgen Jorgensen, and his cruel eyes flashed with the light of triumph.

"There has been a great eruption of Skaptar," said the man, "and the people of the south are flocking into Reykjavik."

"Leave old Skaptar to take care of itself," said Jorgen Jorgensen, "and do you take charge of that man there, and the woman beside him."

So saying, he pointed toward Michael Sunlocks, who, amid the whirl of the crowd around, had stood still in his helpless blindness.

Jason saw and heard all, and he shouted to the people to come to his help, for he was one man against twenty. But the people paid no heed to his calling, for every man was thinking of himself. Then Jason fell on the guards with his bare hands only. And his mighty muscles would have made havoc of many of them, but that Jorgen Jorgensen drew his pistol again and fired at him, and wounded him. Jason knew nothing of his injury until his right arm fell to his side, bleeding and useless. After that, he was seized from behind and from before, and held to the ground while Michael Sunlocks and Greeba were hurried away.

Then the air began to be filled with smoke, a wind that was like a solid wall of black sand swept up from the south, and sudden darkness covered everything.

"It is the lava!" shouted one.

"It's the fiery flood!" shouted another.

"It's the end of the world!" shouted a third.

And at one impulse the people rushed hither, thither—north, south, east, west—some weeping, some shrieking, some swearing, some laughing like demons—all wild with frenzy and mad with terror.

Jorgen Jorgensen found his little piebald pony where he had left it, for the docile beast, with the reins over its head, was munching the grass at the foot of the causeway. He mounted, and rode past Jason as the men were loosening their hold of him, and peering into his face he said with a sneer, "If this is the end of the world, as they say, make the best of what is left of it, and fly."

With that, he thrust spurs into his horse's sides, and went off at utmost speed.

Then Jason was alone on the plain. Not another human soul was left. The crowd was gone; the Mount of Laws was silent, and a flock of young sheep ran past it bleating. Over the mountains to the south a red glow burned along the black sky, and lurid flames shot through it.

Such was the beginning of the eruption of Skaptar. And Jason staggered along in the day-darkness, alone, abandoned, shouting like a maniac, swearing like a man accursed, crying out to the desolate waste and the black wind sweeping over it, that if this were the end of the world, he had a question to ask of Him who made it: Why He had broken His word, which said that the wages of sin was death—why the avenger that was promised had not come to smite down the wicked and save the just?

VI

In this valley of the Loberg there is a long peninsula of rock stretching between the western bank of the lake and the river called the Oxara. It begins in a narrow neck where is a pass for one horse only, and ends in a deep pool over a jagged precipice, with a mighty gorge of water falling from the opposite ravine. It is said that this awful place was used in ancient days for the execution of women who had killed their children, and of men who had robbed the widow and the orphan.

Near the narrowest part of the peninsula a man was plunging along in the darkness, trusting solely to the sight of his pony, for his own eyes could see nothing. Two long hours he had been groping his way from the Mount of Laws, and he was still within one short mile of it. But at last he saw help at hand in his extremity, for a man on foot approached him out of the gloom. He took him for a farmer of those parts, and hailed him with hearty cheer.

"Good man," he said, "put me on the right path for Reykjavik, and you shall have five kroner, and welcome."

But scarcely had he spoken when he recognized the man he had

met, and the man recognized him. The one was Jason, and the other Jorgen Jorgensen.

Jorgen Jorgensen thought his hour had come, for, putting his hand to his weapon, he remembered that he had not reloaded it since he had shot at Jason, and so he flung it away. But the old tiger was not to be subdued. "Come," he said, out of the black depths of his heart, "let us have done. What is it to be?"

Then Jason stepped back, and said: "That is the way to Reykjavik—over the stream and through the first chasm on the left."

At this, Jorgen Jorgensen seemed to catch his breath. He tried to speak and could not.

"No," said Jason. "It may be weakness, it may be folly, it may be madness, but you were my mother's father, God pity her and forgive you, and not even at the price of my brother's life will I have your blood on my hands. Go!"

Jorgen Jorgensen touched his horse and rode on, with his gray, dishonored head deep in his breast. And, evil man as he was, surely his cold heart was smitten with shame.

CHAPTER VI

THE GOSPEL OF LOVE

No Althing was held in Iceland in that year of the great eruption of Skaptar. The dread visitation lasted six long months, from the end of June to the beginning of January of the year following. During that time the people of the south and southeast, who had been made homeless and penniless, were constantly trooping into Reykjavik in hundreds and tens of hundreds. The population of the capital rose from less than two thousand to more than twenty thousand. Where so many were housed no man ever knew, and how they lived none can say. Every hut, every hovel, every hole was full of human beings. Men, women, and children crawled like vermin in every quarter. For food, they had what fish came out of the sea, and when the frost covered the fiord a foot deep with ice, they starved on fish bones and moss and seaweed.

By this time a cry for help had gone up throughout Europe, and Denmark and England had each sent a shipload of provisions, corn and meal and potatoes. The relief came late, the ships were caught in the ice, and held ice-bound a long month off Reykianess, and when at length the food for which the people famished was brought

into Reykjavik harbor, the potatoes were like slabs of leather and the corn and meal like blocks of stone.

But even in this land of fire and frost, the Universal Mother is good to her children, and the people lived through their distresses. By the end of February they were trooping back to the scenes of their former homes, for, desolate as those places were, they loved them and clung to them still.

In the days of this awful calamity there were few that remembered Michael Sunlocks. Jorgen Jorgensen might have had his will of him then, and scarce anybody the wiser. That he held his hand was due first to fear and then to contempt; fear of Copenhagen, contempt of the man who had lost his influence over the people of Iceland. He was wrong on both counts. Copenhagen cared nothing for the life of Michael Sunlocks, and laughed at the revolution whereof he had been the head and centre. But when the people of Iceland recovered from the deadly visitation, their hearts turned back to the man who had suffered for their sakes.

Then it appeared that through these weary months Michael Sunlocks had been lying in the little house of detention at Reykjavik, with no man save one man, and that was old Adam Fairbrother, to raise a voice on his behalf, and no woman save one woman, and that was Greeba, to cling to him in his extremity. Neither of these had been allowed to come near to him, but both had been with him always. Again and again old Adam had forced his way to the Governor, and protested that Michael Sunlocks was not being treated as a prisoner, but as a condemned criminal and galley-slave; and again and again Greeba had come and gone between her lodgings at the house of the Bishop and her heart's home at the prison, with food and drink for him who lay in darkness and solitude. Little he knew to whom he was thus beholden, for she took pains to keep her secret, but all Reykjavik saw what she was doing. And the heart of Reykjavik was touched when she brought her child from Krisuvik, thinking no shame of her altered state, content to exist in simple poverty where she had once lived in wealth, if so be that she might but touch the walls that contained her husband.

Seeing how the sympathy was going, Jorgen Jorgensen set himself to consider what step to take, and finally concluded to remove Michael Sunlocks as far as possible from the place where his power was still great, and his temptation to use it was powerful. The remotest spot under his rule was Grimsey, an island lying on the Arctic circle, thirty-five miles from the mainland. It was small, it was sparsely populated, its inhabitants were fishermen with no

craft but open rowboats; it had no trade; no vessels touched at it, and the sea that separated it from Iceland was frozen during many months of the year. And to this Island Jorgensen decided that Michael Sunlocks should go.

When the word was brought to Michael Sunlocks, he asked what he was expected to do on that little rock at the end of the world, and said that Grimsey would be his sentence of death.

"I prefer to die, for I have no great reason to wish for life," he said; "but if I must live, let me live here. I am blind, I do not know the darkness of this place, and all I ask of you is air and water."

Old Adam, too, protested loudly, whereupon Jorgen Jorgensen answered with a smile that he had supposed that all he intended to do was for the benefit of the prisoner himself, who would surely prefer a whole island to live upon to being confined in a cell at Reykjavik.

"He will there have liberty to move about," said Jorgen, "and he will live under the protection of the Danish laws."

"Then that will be more than he has done here," said Adam, boldly, "where he has existed at the caprice of a Danish tyrant."

The people of Reykjavik heard of the banishment with surprise and anger, but nothing availed to prevent it. When the appointed day came, Michael Sunlocks was marched out of his prison and taken off toward the Bursting-sand desert between a line of guards. There was a great throng to bid adieu to him, and to groan at the power that sent him. His face was pale, but his bodily strength was good. His step was firm and steady, and gave hardly a hint of his blindness. His farewell of those who crowded upon him was simple and manly.

"Good-by," he said, "and though with my eyes I can not see you, I can see you with my heart, and that is the better sight whereof death alone can rob me. No doubt you have much to forgive to me; so forgive it to me now, for we shall meet no more."

There was many a sob at that word, but the two who would have been most touched by it were not there to hear it, for Greeba and old Adam were busy with their own enterprise, as we shall learn hereafter.

When Michael Sunlocks was landed at Grimsey, he was offered first as bondman for life, or prisoner-slave to the largest bonder there, a grasping old miser named Jonsson, who, like Jorgen himself, had never allowed his bad conscience to get the better of him. But Jonsson looked at Sunlocks with a curl of the lip and said: "What's the use of a blind man?" So the end of all was that Sun-

locks was put in charge of the priest of the island. The priest was to take him into his house, to feed, clothe, and attend to him, and report his condition twice a year to the Governor at Reykjavik. For such service to the State, the good man was to receive an annual stipend of one hundred kroner. And all arrangements being made, the escort that had brought Michael Sunlocks the ten days' journey over the desert set their faces back toward the capital.

Michael Sunlocks was then on the edge of the habitable world. There was no attempt to confine him, for his home was an island bound by a rocky coast; he was blind and, therefore, helpless, and he could not step out a thousand yards alone without the danger of walking over a precipice into the sea. So that with all his brave show of liberty, he was as much in fetters as if his feet had been enchained to the earth beneath them.

The priest, who was in truth his jailer, was one who has already been heard of in this history, being no other than the Sigfus Thomsson (titled Sir from his cure of souls) who was banished from his chaplaincy at Reykjavik six and twenty years before for marrying Stephen Orry to Rachel, the daughter of the Governor-General Jorgensen. He had been young then, and since his life had been cut in twain he had fallen into some excesses. Thus it had often happened that when his people came to church over miles of their trackless country he had been too drunk to officiate, and sometimes when they wished to make sure of him for a wedding or a christening, they had been compelled to decoy him into his house overnight and lock him up until morning. Now he was elderly and lived alone, save for a fractious old man-servant, in a straggling old moss-covered house, or group of houses. He was weak of will, timid as a deer, and infirm of purpose, yet he was beloved by all men and pitied by all women for his sweet simplicity, whereof anyone might take advantage, and for the tenderness that could never resist a story of distress.

The coming of Michael Sunlocks startled him out of his tipsy sleep of a quarter of a century, and his whole household was put into a wild turmoil. In the midst of it, when he was at his wit's end to know what to do for his prisoner-guest, a woman, a stranger to Grimsey, carrying a child in her arms, presented herself at his door. She was young and comely, poorly but not meanly clad, and she offered herself to the priest as his servant. Her story was simple, touching, and plausible. She had lately lost her husband, an Icelander, though she herself was a foreigner, as her speech might tell. And hearing at Husavik that the priest of Grimsey was a lone old

gentleman without kith or kin or belongings, she had bethought herself to come and say that she would be glad to take service from him for the sake of the home he might offer her.

It was Greeba, and simple old Sir Sigfus fell an easy prey to her woman's wit. He wiped his rheumy eyes while she told her story, and straightway sent her into the kitchen. Only one condition he made with her, and that was that she was to bear herself in his house as Iceland women bear themselves in the houses of Iceland masters. No more than that and no less. She was to keep to her own apartments and never allow herself to be seen or heard by a guest that was henceforth to live with him. That good man was blind, and would trouble her but little, for he had seen sorrow, poor soul, and was very silent.

Greeba consented to this with all earnestness, for it fell straight in the way of her own designs. But with a true woman's innocent duplicity she bowed modestly and said: "He shall never know that I'm in your house, sir, unless you tell him so yourself."

Thus did Greeba place herself under the same roof with Michael Sunlocks, and baffle discovery by the cunning of love. Two purposes were to be served by her artifice. First, she was to be constantly by the side of her husband, to nurse him and tend him, to succor him, and to watch over him. Next, she was to be near him for her own sake, and for love's sake, to win him back to her some day by means more dear than those that had won him for her at the first. She had decided not to reveal herself to him in the meantime, for he had lost faith in her affection. He had charged her with marrying him for pride's sake, but he should see that she had married him for himself alone. The heart of his love was dead, but day by day, unknown, unseen, unheard, she would breathe upon it, until the fire in its ashes lived again. Such was the design with which Greeba took the place of a menial in the house where her husband lived as a prisoner, and little did she count the cost of it.

Six months passed, and she kept her promise to the priest to live as an Iceland servant in the house of an Iceland master. She was never seen and never heard, and what personal service was called for was done by the snappish old man-servant. But she filled the old house, once so muggy and dark, with all the cheer and comfort of life. She knew that Michael Sunlocks felt the change, for one day she heard him say to the priest, as he lifted his blind face and seemed to look around, "One would think that this place must be full of sunshine."

"Why, and so it is," said the priest, "and that's my good housekeeper's doing."

"I have heard her step," said Michael Sunlocks. "Who is she?"

"A poor young woman that has lately lost her husband," said the priest.

"Young, you say?" said Sunlocks.

"Why, yes, young as I go," said the priest.

"Poor soul!" said Sunlocks.

It cost Greeba many a pang not to fling herself at her husband's feet at hearing that word so sadly spoken. But she remembered her promise and was silent. Not long afterward she heard Michael Sunlocks ask the priest if he had never thought of marriage. And the priest answered yes, that he was to have married at Reykjavik about the time he was sent to Grimsey, but the lady had looked shy at his banishment and declined to share it.

"So I have never looked at a woman again," said the priest.

"And I daresay you have your tender thoughts of her, though so badly treated," said Sunlocks.

"Well, yes," said the priest, "yes."

"You were chaplain at Reykjavik, but looking to be priest or dean, and perhaps bishop some day?" said Sunlocks.

"Well, maybe so; such dreams come in one's youth," said the priest.

"And when you were sent to Grimsey there was nothing before you but a cure of less than a hundred souls?" said Sunlocks.

"That is so," said the priest.

"The old story," said Sunlocks and he drew a deep breath.

But deeper far was the breath that Greeba drew, for it seemed to be the last gasp of her heart.

A year passed, and never once had Greeba spoken that her husband might hear her. But if she did not speak, she listened always, and the silence of her tongue seemed to make her ears the more keen. Thus she found a way to meet all his wishes, and before he had asked he was answered. If the day was cold he found gloves to his hand; if he thought to wash there was water beside him; if he wished to write the pen lay near his fingers. Meantime he never heard more than a light footfall and the rustle of a dress about him, but as these sounds awoke painful memories he listened and said nothing.

The summer had come and gone in which he could walk out by the priest's arm, or lie by the hour within sound of a stream, and the winter had fallen in with its short days and long nights. And once, when the snow lay thick on the ground, Greeba heard him say how cheerfully he might cheat time of many a weary hour of days like that if only he had a fiddle to beguile them. At that she

remembered that it was not want of money that had placed her where she was, and before the spring of that year a little church organ came from Reykjavik, addressed to the priest, as a present from some one whose name was unknown to him.

"Some guardian angel seems to hover around us," said Michael Sunlocks, "to give us everything that we can wish for."

The joy in his blind face brought smiles into the face of Greeba, but her heart was heavy for all that. To live within hourly sight of love, yet never to share it, was to sit at a feast and eat nothing. To hear his voice, yet never to answer it, to see his face, yet never to touch it with the lips that hungered to kiss it, was an ordeal more terrible than any woman's heart could bear. Should she not speak? Might she not reveal herself? Not yet, not yet! But how long, oh, how long?

In the heat of her impatience she could not quite restrain herself, and, though she dared not speak, she sang. It was on the Sunday after the organ came, when all the people at Grimsey were at church, in their strong odor of fish and sea-fowl, to hear the strange new music. Michael Sunlocks played it, and when the people sang Greeba also joined them. Her voice was low at first, but she soon lost herself and then it rose above the other voices. Suddenly the organ stopped, and she was startled to see the blind face of her husband turning in her direction.

Later the same day she heard Sunlocks say to the priest, "Who was the lady who sang?"

"Why, that was my good housekeeper," said the priest.

"And did you say that she had lost her husband?" said Sunlocks.

"Yes, poor thing, and she is a foreigner, too," said the priest.

"Did you say a foreigner?" said Sunlocks.

"Yes, and she has a child left with her also," said the priest.

"A child?" said Sunlocks. And then after a pause he added, with more indifference, "Poor girl! poor girl!"

Hearing this, Greeba fluttered on the verge of discovering herself. "If only I could be sure," she thought, but she could not; and the more closely for the chance that had so nearly revealed her, she hid herself henceforward in the solitude of an Iceland servant.

Two years passed and then Greeba had to share her secret with another. That other was her own child. The little man was nearly three years old by this time, walking a little and talking a great deal, and not to be withheld by any care from going over every corner of the house. He found Michael Sunlocks sitting alone in his darkness, and the two struck up a fast friendship. They talked in baby fashion, and played on the floor for hours. With a

wild thrill of the heart, Greeba saw those twain together, and it cost her all she had of patience and self-command not to break in upon them with a shower of rapturous kisses. But she held back her heart like a dog on the leash and listened, while her eyes rained tears and her lips smiled, to the words that passed between them.

"And what's your name, my sweet one?" said Sunlocks in English.

"Michael," lisped the little man.

"So? And an Englishman, too. That's brave."

"Ot's the name of *your* 'ickle boy?"

"Ah, I've got none, sweetheart."

"Oh."

"But if I had one perhaps his name would be Michael also."

"Oh."

The little eyes looked up into the blind face, and the little lip began to fall. Then, by a sudden impulse, the little legs clambered up to the knee of Sunlocks, and the little head nestled close against his breast.

"*I'll* be your 'ickle boy."

"So you shall, my sweet one, and you shall come again and sit with me, and sing to me, for I am very lonely sometimes, and your dear voice will cheer me."

But the little man had forgotten his trouble by this time, and scrambled back to the floor. There he sat on his haunches like a frog, and cried, "Look! look! look!" as he held up a white pebble in his dumpy hand.

"I can not look, little one, for I am blind."

"Ot's blind?"

"Having eyes that can not see, sweetheart."

"Oh."

"But *your* eyes *can* see, and if you are to be *my* little boy, my little Michael, your eyes shall see for my eyes also, and you shall come to me every day, and tell me when the sun is shining, and the sky is blue, and then we will go out together and listen for the birds that will be singing."

"Dat's nice," said the little fellow, looking down at the pebble in his palm, and just then the priest came into the house out of the snow.

"How comes it that this sweet little man and I have never met before?" said Sunlocks.

"You might live ten years in an Iceland house and never see the children of its servants," said the priest.

"I've heard his silvery voice, though," said Sunlocks. "What is the color of his eyes?"

"Blue," said the priest.

"Then his hair—this long curly hair—it must be of the color of the sun?" said Sunlocks.

"Flaxen," said the priest.

"Run along to your mother, sweetheart, run," said Sunlocks, and, dropping back in his seat, he murmured, "How easily he might have been my son indeed."

Kneeling on both knees, her hot face turned down and her parted lips quivering, Greeba had listened to all this with the old delicious trembling at both sides of her heart. And going back to her own room, she caught sight of herself in the glass, and saw that her eyes were dancing like diamonds and all her cheeks a rosy red. Life, and a gleam of sunshine, seemed to have shot into her face in an instant, and while she looked there came over her a creeping thrill of delight, for she knew that she was beautiful. And because *he* loved beauty whose love was everything to her, she cried for joy, and picked up her boy, where he stood tugging at her gown, and kissed him rapturously.

The little man, with proper manly indifference to such endearments, wriggled back to the ground, and then Greeba remembered, with a flash that fell on her brain like a sword, that her husband was blind now, and all the beauty of the world was nothing to him. Smitten by this thought, she stood a moment, while the sunshine died out of her eyes and the rosy red out of her cheeks. But presently it came to her to ask herself if Sunlocks was blind forever, and if nothing could be done for him. This brought back, with pangs of remorse for such long forgetfulness, the memory of some man, an apothecary of Husavik, who had the credit of curing many of blindness after accidents in the northern mines where free men worked for wage. So, thinking of this apothecary throughout that day and the next, she found at last a crooked way to send money to him, out of the store that still remained to her, and to ask him to come to Grimsey.

But, waiting for the coming of the apothecary, a new dread, that was also a new hope, stole over her.

Since that first day on which her boy and her husband talked together, and every day thereafter when Sunlocks had called out "Little Michael! little Michael!" and she had sent the child in, with his little flaxen curls combed out, his little chubby face rubbed to a shiny red, and all his little body smelling sweet with the soft odors of childhood, she had noticed—she could not help it—that

Sunlocks listened for the sound of her own footstep whenever by chance (which might have been rare) she passed his way.

And at first this was a cause of fear to her, lest he should discover her before her time came to reveal herself; and then of hope that he might even do so, and save her against her will from the sickening pains of hungry waiting; and finally of horror, that perhaps after all he was thinking of her as another woman. This last thought sent all the blood of her body tingling into her face, and on the day it flashed upon her, do what she would she could not but hate him for it as for an infidelity that might not be forgiven.

"He never speaks of me," she thought, "never thinks of me; I am dead to him; quite, quite dead and swept out of his mind."

It was a cruel conflict of love and hate, and if it had come to a man he would have said within himself, "By this token I know that she whom I love has forgotten me, and may be happy with another some day. Well, I am nothing—let me go my ways." But that is not the gospel of a woman's love, with all its sweet, delicious selfishness. So after Greeba had told herself once or twice that her husband had forgotten her, she told herself a score of times that do what he would he should yet be hers, hers only, and no other woman's in all the wide world. Then she thought, "How foolish! Who is there to take him from me? Why, no one."

About the same time she heard Sunlocks question the priest concerning her, asking what the mother of little Michael was like to look upon. And the priest answered that if the eyes of an old curmudgeon like himself could see straight, she was comely beyond her grade in life, and young, too, though her brown hair had sometimes a shade of gray, and gentle and silent, and of a soft and touching voice.

"I've heard her voice once," said Sunlocks. "And her husband was an Icelander, and he is dead, you say?"

"Yes," said the priest; "and she's like myself in one thing."

"And what is that?" said Sunlocks.

"That she has never been able to look at anybody else," said the priest. "And that's why she is here, you must know, burying herself alive on old Grimsey."

"Oh," said Sunlocks, in the low murmur of the blind, "if God had but given me this woman, so sweet, so true, so simple, instead of her—of her—and yet—and yet—"

"Gracious heavens!" thought Greeba, "he is falling in love with me."

At that, the hot flush overspread her cheeks again, and her dark eyes danced, and all her loveliness flowed back upon her in

an instant. And then a subtle fancy, a daring scheme, a wild adventure broke on her heart and head, and made every nerve in her body quiver. She would let him go on; he should think she was the other woman; she would draw him on to love her, and one day when she held him fast and sure, and he was hers, hers, hers only forever and ever, she would open her arms and cry, "Sunlocks, Sunlocks, I am Greeba, Greeba!"

It was while she was in the first hot flush of this wild thought, never doubting but the frantic thing was possible, for love knows no impediments, that the apothecary came from Husavik, saying he was sent by some unknown correspondent named Adam Fairbrother, who had written from London. He examined the eyes of Michael Sunlocks by the daylight first, but the season being the winter season, and the daylight heavy with fog from off the sea, he asked for a candle, and Greeba was called to hold it while he examined the eyes again. Never before had she been so near to her husband throughout the two years that she had lived under the same roof with him, and now that she stood face to face with him, within sound of his very breathing, with nothing between them but the thin gray film that lay over his dear eyes, she could not persuade herself but that he was looking at her and seeing her. Then she began to tremble, and presently a voice said:

"Steadily, young woman, steadily, or your candle may fall on the good master's face."

She tried to compose herself, but could not, and when she had recovered from her first foolish dread, there came a fear that was not foolish—a fear of the verdict of the apothecary. Waiting for this in those minutes that seemed to be hours, she knew that she was on the verge of betraying herself, and however she held her breath she could see that her bosom was heaving.

"Yes," said the apothecary, calmly, "yes, I see no reason why you should not recover your sight."

"Thank God!" said Michael Sunlocks.

"Thank God again," said the priest.

And Greeba, who had dropped the candle to the floor at length, had to run from the room on the instant, lest the cry of her heart should straightway be the cry of her lips as well, "Thank God, again and again, forever and forever."

And, being back in her own apartment, she plucked up her child into her arms, and cried over him, and laughed over him, and whispered strange words of delight into his ear, mad words of love, wild words of hope.

"Yes, yes," she whispered, "he will recover his sight, and see

his little son, and know him for his own, his own, his own. Oh, yes, yes, yes, he will know him, he will know him, for he will see his own face, his own dear face, in little Michael's."

But next day, when the apothecary had gone, leaving lotions and drops for use throughout a month, and promising to return at the end of it, Greeba's new joy made way for a new terror, as she reflected that just as Sunlocks would see little Michael if he recovered his sight, so he would see herself. At that thought all her heart was in her mouth again, for she told herself that if Sunlocks saw her he would also see what deception she had practised in that house, and would hate her for it, and tell her, as he had told her once before, that it came of the leaven of her old lightness that had led her on from false-dealing to false-dealing, and so he would turn his back upon her or drive her from him.

Then in the cruel war of her feelings she hardly knew whether to hope that Sunlocks should recover his sight, or remain as he was. Her pity cried out for the one, and her love for the other. If he recovered, at least there would be light for him in his dungeon, though she might not be near to share it. But if he remained as he was, she would be beside him always, his second sight, his silent guardian spirit, eating her heart out with hungry love, but content and thanking God.

"Why couldn't I leave things as they were?" she asked herself, but she was startled out of the selfishness of her love by a great crisis that came soon afterward.

Now Michael Sunlocks had been allowed but little intercourse with the world during the two and a half years of his imprisonment since the day of his recapture at the Mount of Laws. While in the prison at Reykjavik he had heard the pitiful story of that day; who his old yoke-fellow had been, what he had done and said, and how at last, when his brave scheme had tottered to ruin, he had gone out of the ken and knowledge of all men. Since Sunlocks came to Grimsey he had written once to Adam Fairbrother, asking tenderly after the old man's own condition, earnestly after Greeba's material welfare, and with deep affectionate solicitude for the last tidings of Jason. His letter never reached its destination, for the Governor of Iceland was the postmaster as well. And Adam on his part had written twice to Michael Sunlocks, once from Copenhagen, where (when Greeba had left for Grimsey) he had gone by help of her money from Reykjavik, thinking to see the King of Denmark in his own person; and once from London, whereto he had followed on when that bold design had failed him. But Adam's letter shared the fate of the letter of Sunlocks, and thus through

two long years no news of the world without had broken the silence of that lonely home on the rock of the Arctic seas.

But during that time there had been three unwritten communications from Jorgen Jorgensen. The first came after some six months in the shape of a Danish sloop of war, which took up its moorings in the roadstead outside; the second after a year, in the shape of a flagstaff and flag which were to be used twice a day for signaling to the ship that the prisoner was still in safe custody; the third after two years, in the shape of a huge lock and key, to be placed on some room in which the prisoner was henceforward to be confined. These three communications, marking in their contrary way the progress of old Adam's persistent suit, first in Denmark and then in England, were followed after a while by a fourth. This was a message from the Governor at Reykjavik to the old priest of Grimsey, that, as he valued his livelihood and life he was to keep close guard and watch over his prisoner, and, if need be, to warn him that a worse fate might come to him at any time.

Now, the evil hour when this final message came was just upon the good time when the apothecary from Husavik brought the joyful tidings that Sunlocks might recover his sight, and the blow was the heavier for the hope that had gone before it. All Grimsey shared both, for the fisher-folk had grown to like the pale stranger who, though so simple in speech and manner, had been a great man in some way that they scarcely knew—having no one to tell them, being so far out of the world—but had fallen upon humiliation and deep dishonor. Michael Sunlocks himself took the blow with composure, saying it was plainly his destiny and of a piece with the rest of his fate, wherein no good thing had ever come to him without an evil one coming on the back of it. The tender heart of the old priest was thrown into wild commotion, for Sunlocks had become, during the two years of their life together, as a son to him, a son that was as a father also, a stay and guardian, before whom his weakness—that of intemperance—stood rebuked.

But the trouble of old Sir Sigfus was as nothing to that of Greeba. In the message of the Governor she saw death, instant death, death without word or warning, and every hour of her life thereafter was beset with terrors. It was the month of February; and if the snow fell from the mossy eaves in heavy thuds, she thought it was the muffled tread of the guards who were to come for her husband; and if the ice-floes that swept down from Greenland cracked on the coast of Grimsey, she heard the shot that was to end his life. When Sunlocks talked of destiny she cried, and when the priest railed at Jorgen Jorgensen (having his own reason

to hate him) she cursed the name of the tyrant. But all the while she had to cry without tears and curse only in the dark silence of her heart, though she was near to betraying herself a hundred times a day.

"Oh, it is cruel," she thought, "very, very cruel. Is this what I have waited for all this weary, weary time?"

And though so lately her love had fought with her pity to prove that it was best for both of them that Sunlocks should remain blind, she found it another disaster now, in the dear inconsistency of womanhood, that he should die on the eve of regaining his sight.

"He will never see his boy," she thought, "never, never, never now."

Yet she could hardly believe it true that the cruel chance could befall. What good would the death of Sunlocks do to any one? What evil did it bring to any creature that he was alive on that rock at the furthest ends of the earth and sea? Blind, too, and helpless, degraded from his high place, his young life wrecked, and his noble gifts wasted! There must have been some mistake. She would go out to the ship and ask if it were not so.

And with such wild thoughts she hurried off to the little village at the edge of the bay. There she stood a long hour by the fishermen's jetty, looking wistfully out to where the sloop-of-war lay, like a big woden tub, between gloomy sea and gloomy sky, and her spirit failed her, and though she had borrowed a boat she could go no further.

"They might laugh at me, and make a jest of me," she thought, "for I can not tell them that I am his wife."

With that she went her way back as she came, crying on the good powers to tell her what to do next, and where to look for help. And entering in at the porch of her own apartments, which stood aside from the body of the house, she heard voices within, and stopped to listen. At first she thought they were the voices of her child and her husband; but though one of them was that of little Michael, the other was too deep, too strong, too sad for the voice of Sunlocks.

"And so your name is Michael, my brave boy. Michael! Michael!" said the voice, and it was strange and yet familiar. "And how like you are to your mother, too! How like! How very like!" And the voice seemed to break in the speaker's throat.

Greeba grew dizzy, and stumbled forward. And, as she entered the house, a man rose from the settle, put little Michael to the ground, and faced about to her. The man was Jason.

CHAPTER VII

THE GOSPEL OF RENUNCIATION

I

WHAT had happened in the great world during the two years in which Michael Sunlocks had been out of it is very simple and easily told. Old Adam Fairbrother had failed at London as he had failed at Copenhagen, and all the good that had come of his efforts had ended in evil. It was then that accident helped him in his despair.

The relations of England and Denmark had long been doubtful, for France seemed to be stepping between them. Napoleon was getting together a combination of powers against England, and in order to coerce Denmark into using her navy—a small but efficient one—on the side of the alliance, he threatened to send a force overland. He counted without the resources of Nelson, who, with no more ado than setting sail, got across to Copenhagen, took possession of every ship of war that lay in Danish waters, and brought them home to England in a troop.

When Adam heard of this he saw his opportunity in a moment, and hurrying away to Nelson at Spithead he asked if among the Danish ships that had been captured there was a sloop-of-war that had lain near two years off the island of Grimsey. Nelson answered, No, but that if there was such a vessel still at liberty he was not of a mind to leave it to harass him. So Adam told why the sloop was there, and Nelson, waiting for no further instructions, despatched an English man-of-war, with Adam aboard of her, to do for the last of the Danish fleet what had been done for the body of it, and at the same time to recover the English prisoner whom she had been sent to watch.

Before anything was known of this final step of Nelson, his former proceeding had made a great noise throughout Europe, where it was loudly condemned as against the law of nations, by the racals who found themselves outwitted. When the report reached Reykjavik, Jorgen Jorgensen saw nothing that could come of it but instant war between Denmark and England, and nothing that could come of war with England but disaster to Denmark, for he knew the English navy of old. So to make doubly sure of his

own position in a tumult wherein little things would of a certainty be seized up with great ones, he conceived the idea of putting Michael Sunlocks out of the way, and thus settling one harassing complication. Then losing no time he made ready a despatch to the officer in command of the sloop-of-war off Grimsey, ordering him to send a company of men ashore immediately to execute the prisoner lying in charge of the priest of the island.

Now this despatch, whereof the contents became known throughout Reykjavik in less time than Jorgen took to write and seal it, had to be carried to Grimsey by two of his body-guard. But the men were Danes, and as they did not know the way across the Bursting-sand desert, an Iceland guide had to be found for them. To this end the two taverns of the town were beaten up for a man, who at that season—it was winter, and the snow lay thick over the lava streams and the sand—would adventure so far from home.

And now it was just at this time, after two and a half years in which no man had seen him or heard of him, that Jason returned to Reykjavik. Scare any one knew him. He was the wreck of himself, a worn, torn, pitiful, broken ruin of a man. People lifted both hands at sight of him, but he showed no self-pity. Day after day, night after night, he frequented the taverns. He drank as he had never before been known to drink; he laughed as he had never been heard to laugh; he sang as he had never been heard to sing, and to all outward appearance he was nothing now but a shameless, graceless, disorderly, abandoned profligate.

Jorgen Jorgensen heard that Jason had returned, and ordered his people to fetch him to Government House. They did so, and Jorgen and Jason stood face to face. Jorgen looked at Jason as one who would say, "Dare you forget the two men whose lives you have taken?" And Jason looked back at Jorgen as one who would answer, "Dare you remember that I spared your own life?" Then, without a word to Jason, old Jorgen turned to his people and said, "Take him away." So Jason went back to his dissipations, and thereafter no man said yea or nay to him.

But when he heard of the despatch, he was sobered by it in a moment, and when the guards came on their search for a guide to the tavern where he was, he leaped to his feet and said, "I'll go."

"You won't pass, my lad," said one of the Danes, "for you would be dead drunk before you crossed the Basket Slope Hill."

"Would I?" said Jason, moodily, "who knows?" And with that he shambled out. But in his heart he cried, "The hour has come at last! Thank God! Thank God!"

Before he was missed he had gone from Reykjavik, and made his way to the desert with his face toward Grimsey.

The next day the guards found their guide and set out on their journey.

The day after that a Danish captain arrived at Reykjavik from Copenhagen, and reported to Jorgen Jorgensen that off the Westmann Islands he had sighted a British man-of-war, making for the northern shores of Iceland. This news put Jorgen into extreme agitation, for he guessed at its meaning in an instant. As surely as the warship was afloat she was bound for Grimsey, to capture the sloop that lay there, and as surely as England knew of the sloop, she also knew of the prisoner whom it was sent to watch. British sea-captains, from Drake downward, had been a race of pirates and cutthroats, and if the captain of this ship, on landing at Grimsey, found Michael Sunlocks dead, he would follow on to Reykjavik and never take rest until he had strung up the Governor and his people to the nearest yardarm.

So thinking in the wild turmoil of his hot old head, wherein everything he had thought before was turned topsy-turvy, Jorgen Jorgensen decided to countermand his order for the execution of Sunlocks. But his despatch was then a day gone on its way. Iceland guides were a tribe of lazy vagabonds, not a man or boy about his person was to be trusted, and so Jorgen concluded that nothing would serve but that he should set out after the guards himself. Perhaps he would find them at Thingvellir, perhaps he would cross them on the desert, but at least he would overtake them before they took boat at Husavik. Twelve hours a day he would ride, old as he was, if only these skulking Iceland giants could be made to ride after him.

Thus were four several companies at the same time on their way to Grimsey: the English man-of-war from Spithead to take possession of the Danish sloop; the guards of the Governor to order the execution of Michael Sunlocks; Jorgen Jorgensen to countermand the order; and Red Jason on his own errand known to no man.

The first to reach was Jason.

II

When Jason set little Michael from his knee to the floor, and rose to his feet as Greeba entered, he was dirty, bedraggled, and unkempt; his face was jaded and old-looking, his skin shoes were splashed with snow, and torn, and his feet were bleeding; his neck

was bare, and his sheepskin coat was hanging to his back only by the woolen scarf that was tied about his waist. Partly from shock at this change, and partly from a confused memory of other scenes —the marriage festival at Government House, the night trial in the little chamber of the Senate, the jail, the mines, and the Mount of Laws—Greeba staggered at sight of Jason and would have cried aloud and fallen. But he caught her in his arms in a moment, and whispered her in a low voice at her ear to be silent, for that he had something to say that must be heard by no one beside herself.

She recovered herself instantly, drew back as if his touch had stung her, and asked with a look of dread if he had known she was there.

"Yes," he answered.

"Where have you come from?"

"Reykjavik."

She glanced down at his bleeding feet, and said, "On foot?"

"On foot," he answered.

"When did you leave?"

"Five days ago."

"Then you have walked night and day across the desert?"

"Night and day."

"Alone?"

"Yes, alone."

She had become more eager at every question, and now she cried, "What has happened? What is going to happen? Do not keep it from me. I can hear it, for I have borne many things. Tell me why have you come?"

"To save your husband," said Jason. "Hush! Listen!"

And then he told her, with many gentle protests against her ghastly looks of fear, of the guards that were coming with the order for the execution of Michael Sunlocks. Hearing that, she waited for no more, but fell to a great outburst of weeping. And until her bout was spent he stood silent and helpless beside her, with a strong man's pains at sight of a woman's tears.

"How she loves him!" he thought, and again and again the word rang in the empty place of his heart.

But when she had recovered herself he smiled as well as he was able for the great drops that still rolled down his own haggard face, and protested once more that there was nothing to fear, for he himself had come to forestall the danger, and things were not yet so far past help but there was still a way to compass it.

"What way?" she asked.

"The way of escape," he answered.

"Impossible," she said. "There is a warship outside, and every path to the shore is watched."

He laughed at that, and said that if every goat track were guarded, yet would he make his way to the sea. And as for the warship outside, there was a boat within the harbor, the same that he had come by, a Shetland smack that had made pretense to put in for haddock, and would sail at any moment that he gave it warning.

She listened eagerly, and, though she saw but little likelihood of escape, she clutched at the chance of it.

"When will you make the attempt?" she asked.

"Two hours before dawn to-morrow," he answered.

"Why so late?"

"Because the nights are moonlight."

"I'll be ready," she whispered.

"Make the child ready also," he said.

"Indeed, yes," she whispered.

"Say nothing to any one, and if any one questions you, answer as little as you may. Whatever you hear, whatever you see, whatever I may do or pretend to do, speak not a word, give not a sign, change not a feature. Do you promise?"

"Yes," she whispered, "yes, yes."

And then suddenly a new thought smote her.

"But, Jason," she said, with her eyes aside, and her fingers running through the hair of little Michael, "but, Jason," she faltered, "you will not betray me?"

"Betray you?" he said, and laughed a little.

"Because," she added quietly, "though I am here, my husband does not know me for his wife. He is blind, and can not see me, and for my own reasons I have never spoken to him since I came."

"You have never spoken to him?" said Jason.

"Never."

"And how long have you lived in this house?"

"Two years."

Then Jason remembered what Sunlocks had told him at the mines, and in another moment he had read Greeba's secret by the light of his own.

"I understand," he said, sadly, "I think I understand."

She caught the look of sorrow in his eyes, and said, "But, Jason, what of yourself?"

At that he laughed again, and tried to carry himself off with a brave gaiety.

"Where have you been?" she asked.

"At Akuyeri, Husavik, Reykjavik, the desert—everywhere, nowhere," he answered.

"What have you been doing?"

"Drinking, gaming, going to the devil—everything, nothing."

And at that he laughed once more, loudly and noisily, forgetting his own warning.

"Jason," said Greeba, "I wronged you once, and you have done nothing since but heap coals of fire on my head."

"No, no; you never wronged me," he said. "I was a fool—that was all. I made myself think that I cared for you. But it's all over now."

"Jason," she said again, "it was not altogether my fault. My husband was everything to me; but another woman might have loved you and made you happy."

"Ay, ay," he said, "another woman, another woman."

"Somewhere or other she waits for you," said Greeba. "Depend on that."

"Ay, somewhere or other," he said.

"So don't lose heart, Jason," she said; "don't lose heart."

"I don't," he said, "not I;" and yet again he laughed. But, growing serious in a moment, he said, "And did you leave home and kindred and come out to this desolate place only that you might live under the same roof with your husband?"

"My home was his home," said Greeba, "my kindred his kindred, and where he was there had I to be."

"And have you waited through these two long years," he said, "for the day and the hour when you might reveal yourself to him?"

"I could have waited for my husband," said Greeba, "through twice the seven long years that Jacob waited for Rachel."

He paused a moment, and then said, "No, no, I don't lost heart. Somewhere or other, somewhere or other—that's the way of it." Then he laughed louder than ever, and every hollow note of his voice went through Greeba like a knife. But in the empty chamber of his heart he was crying in his despair, "My God! how she loves him! How she loves him!"

III

Half-an-hour later, when the winter's day was done, and the candles had been lighted, Greeba went in to the priest, where he sat in his room alone, to say that a stranger was asking to see him.

"Bring the stranger in," said the priest, putting down his spectacles on his open book, and then Jason entered.

"Sir Sigfus," said Jason, "your good name has been known to me ever since the days when my poor mother mentioned it with gratitude and tears."

"Your mother?" said the priest; "who was she?"

"Rachel Jorgensen's daughter, wife of Stephen Orry."

"Then you must be Jason."

"Yes, your reverence."

"My lad, my good lad," cried the priest, and with a look of joy he rose and laid hold of both Jason's hands. "I have heard of you. I hear of you every day, for your brother is with me. Come, let us go to him. Let us go to him. Come!"

"Wait," said Jason. "First let me deliver you a message concerning him."

The old priest's radiant face fell instantly to a deep sadness. "A message?" he said. "You have never come from Jorgen Jorgensen?"

"No."

"From whom, then?"

"My brother's wife," said Jason.

"His wife?"

"Has he never spoken of her?"

"Yes, but as one who had injured him, and bitterly and cruelly wronged and betrayed him."

"That may be so, your reverence," said Jason, "but who can be hard on the penitent and the dying?"

"Is she dying?" said the priest.

Jason dropped his head. "She sends for his forgiveness," he said. "She can not die without it."

"Poor soul, poor soul!" said the priest.

"Whatever her faults, he can not deny her that little mercy," said Jason.

"God forbid it!" said the priest.

"She is alone in her misery, with none to help and none to pity her," said Jason.

"Where is she?" said the priest.

"At Husavik," said Jason.

"But what is her message to me?"

"That you should allow her husband to come to her."

The old priest lifted his hands in helpless bewilderment, but Jason gave him no time to speak.

"Only for a day," said Jason, quickly, "only for one day, an hour, one little hour. Wait, your reverence, do not say no. Think, only think! The poor woman is alone. Let her sins be what they

may, she is penitent. She is calling for her husband. She is calling on you to send him. It is her last request—her last prayer. Grant it, and Heaven will bless you."

The poor old priest was cruelly distressed.

"My good lad," he cried, "it is impossible. There is a ship outside to watch us. Twice a day I have to signal with the flag that the prisoner is safe, and twice a day the bell of the vessel answers me. It is impossible, I say, impossible, impossible! It can not be done. There is no way."

"Leave it to me, and I will find a way," said Jason.

But the old priest only wrung his hands, and cried, "I dare not; I must not; it is more than my place is worth."

"He will come back," said Jason.

"Only last week," said the priest. "I had a message from Reykjavik which foreshadowed his death. He knows it, we all know it."

"But he will come back," said Jason, again.

"My good lad, how can you say so? Where have you lived to think it possible? Once free of the place where the shadow of death hangs over him, what man alive would return to it?"

"He will come back," said Jason firmly; "I know he will, I swear he will."

"No, no," said the old man. "I'm only a simple old priest, buried alive these thirty years, or nearly, on this lonely island of the frozen seas, but I know better than that. It isn't in human nature, my good lad, and no man that breathes can do it. Then think of me, think of me!"

"I do think of you," said Jason, "and to show you how sure I am that he will come back, I will make you an offer."

"What is it?" said the priest.

"To stand as your bondman while he is away," said Jason.

"What! Do you know what you are saying," cried the priest.

"Yes," said Jason, "for I came to say it."

"Do you know," said the priest, "that any day, at any hour, the sailors from yonder ship may come to execute my poor prisoner?"

"I do. But what of that?" said Jason. "Have they ever been here before?"

"Never," said the priest.

"Do they know your prisoner from another man?"

"No."

"Then where is your risk?" said Jason.

"My risk? Mine?" cried the priest, with the great drops bursting from his eyes, "I was thinking of yours. My lad, my good

lad, you have made me ashamed. If you dare risk your life, I dare risk my place, and I'll do it; I'll do it."

"God bless you!" said Jason.

"And now let us go to him," said the priest. "He is in yonder room, poor soul. When the order came from Reykjavik that I was to keep close guard and watch on him, nothing would satisfy him but that I should turn the key on him. That was out of fear of me. He is as brave as a lion, and as a gentle as a lamb. Come, the sooner he hears his wife's message the better for all of us. It will be a sad blow to him, badly as she treated him. But come!"

So saying, the old priest was fumbling his deep pockets for a key, and shuffling along, candle in hand, toward a door at the end of a low passage, when Jason laid hold of his arm and said in a whisper, "Wait!" It isn't fair that I should let you go farther in this matter. You should be ignorant of what we are doing until it is done."

"As you will," said the priest.

"Can you trust me?" said Jason.

"That I can."

"Then give me the key."

The old man gave it.

"When do you make your next signal?"

"At daybreak to-morrow."

"And when does the bell on the ship answer it?"

"Immediately."

"Go to your room, your reverence," said Jason, "and never stir out of it until you hear the ship's bell in the morning. Then come here, and you will find me waiting on this spot to return this key to you. But first answer me again, Do you trust me?"

"I do," said the old priest.

"You believe I will keep to my bargain, come what may?"

"I believe you will keep to it."

"And so I will, as sure as God's above me."

IV

Jason opened the door and entered the room. It was quite dark, save for a dull red fire of dry moss that burned on the hearth in one corner. By this little fire Michael Sunlocks sat, with only his sad face visible in the gloom. His long thin hands were clasped about one knee which was half-raised; his noble head was held down, and his flaxen hair fell across his cheeks to his shoulders.

He had heard the key turn in the lock, and said quietly: "Is that you, Sir Sigfus?"

"No," said Jason.

"Who is it?" said Sunlocks.

"A friend," said Jason.

Sunlocks twisted about as though his blind eyes could see. "Whose voice was that?" he said, with a tremor in his own.

"A brother's," said Jason.

Sunlocks rose to his feet. "Jason?" he cried.

"Yes; Jason."

"Come to me! Come! Where are you? Let me touch you," cried Sunlocks, stretching out both his hands.

Then they fell into each other's arms, and laughed and wept for joy. After a while Jason said:

"Sunlocks, I have brought you a message."

"Not from her, Jason?—no."

"No, not from her—from dear old Adam Fairbrother," said Jason.

"Where is he?"

"At Husavik."

"Why did you not bring him with you?"

"He could not come."

"Jason, is he ill?"

"He has crossed the desert to see you, but he can go no further."

"Jason, tell me, is he dying?"

"The good old man is calling on you night and day, 'Sunlocks!' he is crying. 'Sunlocks! my boy, my son. Sunlocks! Sunlocks!'"

"My dear father, my other father, God bless him!"

"He says he has crossed the seas to find you, and can not die without seeing you again. And though he knows you are here, yet in his pain and trouble he forgets it, and cries, 'Come to me, my son, my Sunlocks.'"

"Now, this is the hardest lot of all," said Sunlocks, and he cast himself down on his chair. "Oh, these blind eyes! Oh, this cruel prison! Oh, for one day of freedom! Only one day, one poor simple day!"

And so he wept, and bemoaned his bitter fate.

Jason stood over him with many pains and misgivings at sight of the distress he had created. And if the eye of Heaven saw Jason there, surely the suffering in his face atoned for the lie on his tongue.

"Hush, Sunlocks, hush!" he said, in a tremulous whisper. "You can have the day you wish for; and if you can not see, there

are others to lead you. Yes, it is true, it is true, for I have settled it. It is all arranged, and you are to leave this place to-morrow."

Hearing this, Michael Sunlocks made first a cry of delight, and then said after a moment, "But what of this poor old priest?"

"He is a good man, and willing to let you go," said Jason.

"But he has had warning that I may be wanted at any time," said Sunlocks, "and though his house is a prison, he has made it a home, and I would not do him a wrong to save my life."

"He knows that," said Jason, and he says that you will come back to him though death itself should be waiting to receive you."

"He is right," said Sunlocks; "and no disaster save this one could take me from him to his peril. The good old soul! Come, let me thank him." And with that he was making for the door.

But Jason stepped between, and said, "Nay, it isn't fair to the good priest that we should make him a party to our enterprise. I have told him all that he need know, and he is content. Now, let him be ignorant of what we are doing until it is done. Then if anything happens it will appear that you have escaped."

"But I am coming back," said Sunlocks.

"Yes, yes," said Jason, "but listen. To-morrow morning, two hours before daybreak, you will go down to the bay. There is a small boat lying by the little jetty, and a fishing smack at anchor about a biscuit-throw farther out. The good woman who is housekeeper here will lead you—"

"Why she?" interrupted Sunlocks.

Jason paused, and said: "Have you anything against her?"

"No indeed," said Sunlocks. "A good, true woman. One who lately lost her husband, and at the same time all the cheer and hope of life. Simple and sweet, and silent, and with a voice that recalls another who was once very near and dear to me."

"Is she not so still?" said Jason.

"God knows. I scarce can tell. Sometimes I think she is dearer to me than ever, and now that I am blind I seem to see her near me always. It is only a dream, a foolish dream."

"But what if the dream came true?" said Jason.

"That can not be," said Sunlocks. "Yet where is she? What has become of her? Is she with her father? What is she doing?"

"You shall soon know now," said Jason. "Only ask to-morrow and this good woman will take you to her."

"But why not you yourself, Jason?" said Sunlocks.

"Because I am to stay here until you return," said Jason.

"What?" cried Sunlocks. "You are to stay here?"

"Yes," said Jason.

"As bondman to the law instead of me? Is that it? Speak!" cried Sunlocks.

"And why not?" said Jason, calmly.

There was silence for a moment. Sunlocks felt about with his helpless hands until he touched Jason and then he fell sobbing upon his neck.

"Jason, Jason," he cried, "this is more than a brother's love. Ah, you do not know the risk you would run; but I know it, and I must not keep it from you. Any day, any hour, a despatch may come to the ship outside to order that I should be shot. Suppose I were to go to the dear soul who calls for me, and the despatch came in my absence—where would you be then?"

"I should be here," said Jason, simply.

"My lad, my brave lad," crid Sunlocks, "what are you saying? If you can not think for yourself, then think for me. If what I have said were to occur, should I ever know another moment's happiness? No, never, never, though I regained my sight, as they say I may, and my place and my friends—all save one—and lived a hundred years."

Jason started at that thought, but there was no one to look upon his face under the force of it, and he wriggled with it and threw it off.

"But you will come back," he said. "If the despatch comes while you are away, I will say that you are coming, and you will come."

"I may never come back," said Sunlocks. "Only think, my lad. This is winter, and we are on the verge of the Arctic seas, with five-and-thirty miles of water dividing us from the mainland. He would be a bold man who would count for a day on weather in which a little fishing smack could live. And a storm might come up and keep me back."

"The same storm that would keep you back," said Jason, "would keep back the despatch. But why hunt after these chances? Have you any reason to fear that the despatch will come to-day, or to-morrow, or the next day? No, you have none. Then go, and for form's sake—just that, no more, no less—let me wait here until you return."

There was another moment's silence, and then Sunlocks said, "Is that the condition of my going?"

"Yes," said Jason.

"Did this old priest impose it?" asked Sunlocks.

Jason hesitated a moment, and answered, "Yes."

"Then I won't go," said Sunlocks, stoutly.

"If you don't," said Jason, "you will break poor old Adam's heart, for I myself will tell him that you might have come to him, and would not."

"Will you tell him why I would not?" said Sunlocks.

"No," said Jason.

There was a pause, and then Jason said, very tenderly, "Will you go, Sunlocks?'

And Sunlocks answered, "Yes."

V

Jason slept on the form over against the narrow wooden bed of Michael Sunlocks. He lay down at midnight, and awoke four hours later. Then he stepped to the door and looked out. The night was calm and beautiful; the moon was shining, and the little world of Grimsey slept white and quiet under its coverlet of snow. Snow on the roof, snow in the valley, snow on the mountains so clear against the sky and stars; no wind, no breeze, no sound on earth and in air save the steady chime of the sea below.

It was too early yet, and Jason went back into the house. He did not lie down again lest he should oversleep himself, but sat on his form and waited. All was silent in the home of the priest. Jason could hear nothing but the steady breathing of Sunlocks as he slept.

After a while it began to snow, and then the moon went out, and the night became very dark.

"Now is the time," thought Jason, and after hanging a sheepskin over the little skin-covered window, he lighted a candle and awakened Sunlocks.

Sunlocks rose and dressed himself without much speaking, and sometimes he sighed like a down-hearted man. But Jason rattled on with idle talk, and kindled a fire and made some coffee. And when this was done he stumbled his way through the long passages of the Iceland house until he came upon Greeba's room, and there he knocked softly, and she answered him.

She was ready, for she had not been to bed, and about her shoulders and across her breast was a sling of sheepskin, wherein she meant to carry her little Michael as he slept.

"All is ready," he whispered. "He says he may recover his sight. Can it be true?"

"Yes, the apothecary from Husavik said so," she answered.

"Then have no fear. Tell him who you are, for he loves you still."

And, hearing that, Greeba began to cry for joy, and to thank God that the days of her waiting were over at last.

"Two years I have lived alone," she said, "in the solitude of a loveless life and the death of a heartless home. My love has been silent all this weary, weary time, but it is to be silent no longer. At last! At last! My hour has come at last! My husband will forgive me for the deception I have practised upon him. How can he hate me for loving him to all lengths and ends of love? Oh, that the blessed spirit that counts the throbbings of the heart would but count my life from to-day—to-day, to-day, to-day—wiping out all that is past, and leaving only the white page of what is to come."

Then from crying she fell to laughing, as softly and as gently, as if her heart grudged her voice the joy of it. She was like a child who is to wear a new feather on the morrow, and is counting the minutes until that morrow comes, too impatient to rest, and afraid to sleep lest she should awake too late. And Jason stood aside and heard both her weeping and her laughter.

He went back to Sunlocks, and found him yet more sad than before.

"Only to think," said Sunlocks, "that you, whom I thought my worst enemy, you that once followed me to slay me, should be the man of all men to risk your life for me."

"Yes, life is a fine lottery, isn't it?" said Jason, and he laughed.

"How the Almighty God tears our little passions to tatters," said Sunlocks, "and works His own ends in spite of them."

When all was ready, Jason blew out the candle, and led Sunlocks to the porch. Greeba was there, with little Michael breathing softly from the sling at her breast.

Jason opened the door. "It's very dark," he whispered, "and it is still two hours before the dawn. Sunlocks, if you had your sight already, you could not see one step before you. So give your hand to this good woman, and whatever happens hereafter never, never let it go."

And with that he joined their hands.

"Does she know my way?" said Sunlocks.

"She knows the way for both of you," said Jason. "And now go. Down at the jetty you will find two men waiting for you. Stop! Have you any money?"

"Yes," said Greeba.

"Give some to the men," said Jason. "Good-by. I promised them a hundred kroner. Good-by! Tell them to drop down the bay as silently as they can. Good-by!"

"Good-by!'

"Come," said Greeba, and she drew at the hand of Sunlocks.

"Good-by! Good-by!" said Jason.

But Sunlocks held back a moment, and then in a voice that faltered and broke he said, "Jason—kiss me."

At the next moment they were gone into the darkness and the falling snow—Sunlocks and Greeba, hand in hand, and their child asleep at its mother's bosom.

Jason stood a long hour at the open door, and listened. He heard the footsteps die away; he heard the creak of the crazy wooden jetty: he heard the light plash of the oars as the boat moved off; he heard the clank of the chain as the anchor was lifted; he heard the oars again as the little smack moved down the bay, and not another sound came to his ear through the silence of the night.

He looked across the headland to where the sloop-of-war lay outside, and he saw her lights, and their two white waterways, like pillars of silver, over the sea. All was quiet about her.

Still he stood and listened until the last faint sound of the oars had gone. By this time a wooly light had begun to creep over the mountain tops, and a light breeze came down from them.

"It is the dawn," thought Jason. "They are safe."

He went back into the house, pulled down the sheepskin from the window, and lighted the candle again. After a search he found paper and pens and wax in a cupboard and sat down to write. His hand was hard, he had never been to school, and he could barely form the letters and spell the words. This was what he wrote:

"Whatever you hear, fear not for me. I have escaped, and am safe. But don't expect to see me. I can never rejoin you, for I dare not be seen. And you are going back to your beautiful island, but dear old Iceland is the only place for me. Greeba, good-by; I shall never lose heart. Sunlocks, she has loved you, you only, all the days of her life. Good-by. I am well and happy. God bless you both."

Having written and sealed this letter, he marked it with a cross for superscription, touched it with his lips, laid it back on the table, and put a key on top of it. Then he rested his head on his hands, and for some minutes afterward he was lost to himself in thought. "They would tell him to lie down," he thought, "and now he must sleep. When he awakes he will be out at sea, far out, and all sail set. Before long he will find that he has been betrayed, and demand to be brought back. But they will not heed his anger, for she will have talked with them. Next week or the week after they will put in at the Shetlands, and there he will get my letter.

Then his face will brighten with joy, and he will cry: "To home! To home!" And then—even then—why not?—his sight will come back to him, and he will open his eyes and find his dream come true, and her own dear face looking up at him. At that he will cry, 'Greeba, Greeba, my Greeba,' and she will fall into his arms and he will pluck her to his breast. Then the wind will come sweeping down from the North Sea, and belly out the sail until it sings and the ropes crack and the blocks creak. And the good ship will fly along the waters like a bird to the home of the sun. Home! Home! England! England, and the little green island of her sea!"

"God bless them both," he said aloud, in a voice like a sob, but he leaped to his feet, unable to bear the flow of his thoughts. He put back the paper and pens into the cupboard, and while he was doing so he came upon a bottle of brenni-vin. He took it out and laughed, and drew the cork to take a draught. But he put it down on the table untouched. "Not yet," he said to himself, and then he stepped to the door and opened it.

The snow had ceased to fall and the day was breaking. Great shivering waifs of vapor crept along the mountain sides, and the valley was veiled in mist. But the sea was clear and peaceful, and the sloop-of-war lay on its dark bosom as before.

"Now for the signal," thought Jason.

In less than a minute afterward the flag was floating from the flag-staff, and Jason stood waiting for the ship's answer. It came in due course, a clear-toned bell that rang out over the quiet waters and echoed across the land.

"It's done," thought Jason, and he went back into the house. Lifting up the brenni-vin, he took a long draft of it, and laughed as he did so. Then a longer draft, and laughed yet louder. Still another draft, and another, and another, until the bottle was emptied, and he flung it on the floor.

After that he picked up the key and the letter, and shambled out into the passage, laughing as he went.

"Where are you now, old mole?" he shouted, and again he shouted, until the little house rang with his thick voice and his peals of wild laughter.

The old priest came out of his room in his nightshirt with a lighted candle in his hand.

"God bless me, what's this?" said the old man.

"What's this? Why, your bondman, your bondman, and the key, the key," shouted Jason, and he laughed once more. "Did you think you would never see it again? Did you think I would run away and leave you? Not I, old mole, not I."

"Has he gone?" said the priest, glancing fearfully into the room.

"Gone? Why, yes, of course he has gone," laughed Jason. "They have both gone."

"Both!" said the priest, looking up inquiringly, and at sight of his face Jason laughed louder than ever.

"So you didn't see it, old mole?"

"See what?"

"That she was his wife."

"His wife? Who?"

"Why, your housekeeper, as you called her."

"God bless my soul! And when are they coming back?"

"They are never coming back."

"Never?"

"I have taken care that they never can."

"Dear me! dear me! What does it all mean?"

"It means that the despatch is on its way from Reykjavik, and will be here to-day. Ha! ha! ha!"

"To-day? God save us! And do you intend—no, it can not be—and yet—*do* you intend to die instead of him?"

"Well, and what of that? It's nothing to you, is it? And as for myself, there are old scores against me, and if death had not come to me soon, I should have gone to it."

"I'll not stand by and witness it."

"You will, you shall, you must. And listen—here is a letter. It is for him. Address it to her by the first ship to the Shetlands. The Thora, Shetlands—that will do. And now bring me some more of your brenni-vin, you good old soul, for I am going to take a sleep at last—a long sleep—a long, long sleep at last."

"God pity you! God help you! God bless you!"

"Ay, ay, pray to your God. But *I'll* not pray to him. He doesn't make His world for wretches like me. I'm a pagan, am I? So be it! Good-night, you dear old mole! Good-night! I'll keep to my bargain, never fear. Good-night. Never mind your brenni-vin, I'll sleep without it. Good-night! Good-night!"

Saying this, amid broken peals of unearthly laughter, Jason reeled back into the room, and clashed the door after him. The old priest, left alone in the passage, dropped the foolish candle, and wrung his hands. Then he listened at the door a moment. The unearthly laughter ceased and a burst of weeping followed it.

VI

It was on the day after that the evil work was done. The despatch had arrived, a day's warning had been given, and four sailors, armed with muskets, had come ashore.

It was early morning, and not a soul in Grimsey who had known Michael Sunlocks was there to see. Only Sir Sigfus knew the secret, and he dared not speak. To save Jason from the death that waited for him would be to put himself in Jason's place.

The sailors drew up in a line on a piece of flat ground in front of the house whereon the snow was trodden hard. Jason came out looking strong and content. His step was firm, and his face was defiant. Fate had dogged him all his days. Only in one place, only in one hour, could he meet and beat it. This was that place, and this was that hour. He was solemn enough at last.

By his side the old priest walked, with his white head bent and his nervous hands clasped together. He was mumbling the prayers for the dying in a voice that trembled and broke. The morning was clear and cold, and all the world around was white and peaceful.

Jason took up his stand, and folded his arms behind him. As he did so the sun broke through the clouds and lit up his uplifted face and his long red hair like blood.

The sailors fired and he fell. He took their shots into his heart, the biggest heart for good or ill that ever beat in the breast of man.

VII

Within an hour there was a great commotion on that quiet spot. Jorgen Jorgensen had come, but come too late. One glance told him everything. His order had been executed, but Sunlocks was gone and Jason was dead. Where were his miserable fears now? Where was his petty hate? Both his enemies had escaped him, and his little soul shriveled up at sight of the wreck of their mighty passions.

"What does this mean?" he asked, looking stupidly around him.

And the old priest, transformed in one instant from the poor, timid thing he had been, turned upon him with the courage of a lion.

"It means," he said, face to face with him, "that I am a wretched coward and you are a damned tyrant."

While they stood together so, the report of a cannon came from

the bay. It was a loud detonation, that seemed to heave the sea and shake the island. Jorgen knew what it meant. It meant that the English man-of-war had come.

The Danish sloop struck her colors, and Adam Fairbrother came ashore. He heard what had happened, and gathered with the others where Jason lay with his calm face toward the sky. And going down on his knees he whispered into the deaf ear, "My brave lad, your troubled life is over, your stormy soul is in its rest. Sleep on, sleep well, sleep in peace. God will not forget you."

Then rising to his feet he looked around and said: "If any man thinks that this world is not founded in justice, let him come here and see: There stands the man who is called the Governor of Iceland, and here lies his only kinsman in all the wide wilderness of men. The one is alive, the other is dead; the one is living in power and plenty, the other died like a hunted beast. But which do you choose to be: The man who has the world at his feet or the man who lies at the feet of the world?"

Jorgen Jorgensen only dropped his head while old Adam's lash fell over him. And turning upon him with heat of voice, old Adam cried, "Away with you! Go back to the place of your power. There is no one now to take it from you. But carry this word with you for your warning: Heap up your gold like the mire of the streets, grow mighty and powerful beyond any man living, and when all is done you shall be an execration and a curse and a reproach, and the poorest outcast on life's highway shall cry with me, 'Any fate, oh, merciful heaven, but not that! not that!' Away with you, away! Take your wicked feet away, for this is holy ground!"

And Jorgen Jorgensen turned about on the instant and went off hurriedly, with his face to the earth, like a whipped dog.

VIII

They buried Jason in a piece of untouched ground over against the little wooden church. Sir Sigfus dug the grave with his own hands. It was a bed of solid lava, and in that pit of old fire they laid that young heart of flame. The sky was blue, and the sun shone on the snow so white and beautiful. It had been a dark midnight when Jason came into the world, but it was a glorious morning when he went out of it.

The good priest learning the truth from old Adam, that Jason had loved Greeba, bethought him of a way to remember the dead man's life secret at the last. He got twelve Iceland maidens and taught them an English hymn. They could not understand the

words of it, but they learned to sing them to an English tune. And, clad in white, they stood round the grave of Jason, and sang these words in the tongue he loved the best:

"Time, like an ever rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day."

On the island rock of old Grimsey, close to the margin of the Arctic seas, there is a pyramid of lava blocks, now honeycombed and moss-covered, over Jason's rest. And to this day the place of it is called "The place of Red Jason."

END OF "THE BONDMAN"

THE BLIND MOTHER

I

THE Vale of Newlands lay green in the morning sunlight; the river that ran through its lowest bed sparkled with purple and amber; the leaves prattled low in the light breeze that soughed through the rushes and the long grass; the hills rose sheer and white to the smooth blue lake of the sky, where only one fleecy cloud floated languidly across from peak to peak. Out of unseen places came the bleating of sheep and the rumble of distant cataracts, and above the dull thud of tumbling waters far away was the thin caroling of birds overhead.

But the air was alive with yet sweeter sounds. On the breast of the fell that lies over against Cat Bell a procession of children walked, and sang, and chattered, and laughed. It was St. Peter's Day, and they were rush-bearing; little ones of all ages, from the comely girl of fourteen, just ripening into maidenhood, who walked last, to the sweet boy of four in the pinafore braided with epaulets, who strode along gallantly in front. Most of the little hands carried rushes, but some were filled with ferns, and mosses, and flowers. They had assembled at the schoolhouse, and now, on their way to the church, they were making the circuit of the dale.

They passed over the road that crosses the river at the head of Newlands, and turned down into the path that follows the bed of the valley. At that angle there stands a little group of cottages deliciously cool in their whitewash, nestling together under the heavy purple crag from which the waters of a ghyll fall into a deep basin that reaches to their walls. The last of the group is a cottage with its end to the road, and its open porch facing a garden shaped like a wedge. As the children passed this house an old man, gray and thin and much bent, stood by the gate, leaning on a staff. A collie, with the sheep's dog wooden bar suspended from its shaggy neck, lay at his feet. The hum of voices brought a young woman into the porch. She was bareheaded and wore a light print gown. Her face was pale and marked with lines. She walked cautiously, stretching one hand before her with an uncertain mo-

tion, and grasping a trailing tendril of honeysuckle that swept downward from the roof. Her eyes, which were partly inclined upward and partly turned toward the procession, had a vague light in their bleached pupils. She was blind. At her side, and tugging at her other hand, was a child of a year and a half—a chubby, sunny little fellow with ruddy cheeks, blue eyes, and fair curly hair. Prattling, laughing, singing snatches, and waving their rushes and ferns above their happy, thoughtless heads, the children rattled past. When they were gone the air was empty, as it is when the lark stops in its song.

After the procession of children had passed the little cottage at the angle of the roads, the old man who leaned on his staff at the gate turned about and stepped to the porch.

"Did the boy see them?—did he see the children?" said the young woman who held the child by the hand.

"I mak' na doot," said the old man.

He stooped to the little one and held out one long withered finger. The soft baby hand closed on it instantly.

"Did he laugh? I thought he laughed," said the young woman.

A bright smile played on her lips.

"Maybe so, lass."

"Ralphie has never seen the children before, father. Didn't he look frightened—just a little bit frightened—at first, you know? I thought he crept behind my gown."

"Maybe, maybe."

The little one had dropped the hand of his young mother, and, still holding the bony finger of his grandfather, he toddled beside him into the house.

Very cool and sweet was the kitchen, with whitewashed walls and hard earthen floor. A table and a settle stood by the window, and a dresser that was an armory of bright pewter dishes, trenchers, and piggins, crossed the opposite wall.

"Nay, but sista here, laal lad," said the old man, and he dived into a great pocket at his side.

"Have you brought it? Is it the kitten? Oh, dear, let the boy see it!"

A kitten came out of the old man's pocket, and was set down on the rug at the hearth. The timid creature sat dazed, then raised itself on its hind legs and mewed.

"Where's Ralphie? Is he watching it, father. What is he doing?"

The little one had dropped on hands and knees before the kitten, and was gazing up into its face.

The mother leaned over him with a face that would have beamed with sunshine if the sun of sight had not been missing.

"Is he looking? Doesn't he want to coddle it?"

The little chap had pushed his nose close to the nose of the kitten, and was prattling to it in various inarticulate noises.

"Boo—loo—lal-la—mama."

"Isn't he a darling, father?"

"It's a winsome wee thing," said the old man, still standing, with drooping head, over the group on the hearth.

The mother's face saddened, and she turned away. Then from the opposite side of the kitchen, where she was making pretense to take plates from a plate-rack, there came the sound of suppressed weeping. The old man's eyes followed her.

"Nay, lass; let's have a sup of broth," he said, in a tone that carried another message.

The young woman put plates and a bowl of broth on the table.

"To think that I can never see my own child, and everybody else can see him!" she said, and then there was another bout of tears.

The charcoal-burner supped at his broth in silence. A glistening bead rolled slowly down his wizened cheek: and the interview on the hearth went on without interruption:

"Mew—mew—mew. Boo—loo—lal-la—mama."

The child made efforts to drag himself to his feet by laying hold of the old man's trousers.

"Nay, laddie," said the old man, "mind my claes—they'll dirty thy bran-new brat for thee."

"Is he growing, father?" said the girl.

"Growing?—amain."

"And his eyes—are they changing color?—going brown? Children's eyes do, you know."

"Maybe—I'll not be for saying nay."

"Is he—is he *very* like me, father?"

"Nay—well—nay—I's fancying I see summat of the stranger in the laal chap at whiles."

The young mother turned her head aside.

. . . . . .

The old man's name was Matthew Fisher; but the folks of the countryside called him Laird Fisher. This dubious dignity came of the circumstance that he had been the holder of an absolute royalty in a few acres of land under Hindscarth. The royalty had been many generations in his family. His grandfather had set store by it. When the Lord of the Manor had worked the copper

pits at the foot of the Eal Crags, he had tried to possess himself of the royalties of the Fishers. But the present families resisted the aristocrat. Luke Fisher believed there was a fortune under his feet, and he meant to try his luck on his holding some day. That day never came. His son, Mark Fisher, carried on the tradition, but made no effort to unearth the fortune. They were a cool, silent, slow, and stubborn race. Matthew Fisher followed his father and his grandfather, and inherited the family pride. All these years the tenders of the Lord of the Manor were ignored, and the Fishers enjoyed their title of courtesy or badinage. Matthew married, and had one daughter called Mercy. He farmed his few acres with poor results. The ground was good enough, but Matthew was living under the shadow of the family tradition. One day—it was Sunday morning, and the sun shone brightly—he was rambling by the Po Bett that rises on Hindscarth, and passed through his land, when his eyes glanced over a glittering stone that lay among the pebbles at the bottom of the stream. It was ore, good full ore, and on the very surface. Then the Laird sank a shaft, and all his earnings with it, in an attempt to procure iron or copper. The dalespeople derided him, but he held silently on his way.

"How dusta find the cobbles to-day—any softer?" they would say in passing.

"As soft as the hearts of most folk," he would answer; and then add in a murmur, "and maybe a vast harder nor their heads."

The undeceiving came at length, and then the Laird Fisher was old and poor. His wife died broken-hearted. After that the Laird never rallied. The shaft was left unworked, and the holding lay fallow. Laird Fisher took wage from the Lord of the Manor to burn charcoal in the wood. The breezy irony of the dalesfolk did not spare the old man's bent head. There was a rime current in the vale which ran:

> "There's t'auld laird, and t'young laird, and t'laird among t'barns,
> If iver there comes another laird, we'll hang him up by t'arms."

A second man came to Matthew's abandoned workings. He put money into it and skill and knowledge, struck a vein, and began to realize a fortune. The only thing he did for the old Laird was to make him his banksman at a pound a week—the only thing save one thing, and that is the beginning of this story.

The man's name was Hugh Ritson. He was the second son of a Cumbrian statesman in a neighboring valley, was seven-and-twenty, and had been brought up as a mining engineer, first at

Cleaton Moor and afterward at the College in Jerman Street. When he returned to Cumberland and bought the old Laird's holding he saw something of the old Laird's daughter. He remembered Mercy as a pretty prattling thing of ten or eleven. She was now a girl of eighteen, with a simple face, a timid manner, and an air that was neither that of a woman nor of a child. Her mother was lately dead, her father spent most of his days on the fell (some of his nights also when the charcoal was burning), and she was much alone. Hugh Ritson liked her sweet face, her gentle replies, and her few simple questions. It is unnecessary to go further. The girl gave herself up to him with her whole heart and soul. Then he married another woman.

The wife was the daughter of the Vicar, Parson Christian. Her name was Greta: she was beautiful to look upon—a girl of spirit and character. Greta knew nothing of Hugh Ritson's intercourse with Mercy until after he had become her husband. Mercy was then in the depth of her trouble, and Greta had gone to comfort her. Down to that hour, though idle tongues had wagged, no one had lighted on Mercy's lover, and not even in her fear had she confessed. Greta told her that it was brave and beautiful to shield her friend, but he was unworthy of her friendship or he would stand by her side—who was he? It was a trying moment. Greta urged and pleaded and coaxed, and Mercy trembled and stammered and was silent. The truth came out at last, and from that moment the love between the two women was like the love of David and Jonathan. Hugh Ritson was compelled to stand apart and witness it. He could not recognize it; he dared not oppose it; he could only drop his head and hold his tongue. It was coals of fire on his head from both sides. The women never afterward mentioned him to each other, and yet somehow—by some paradox of love—he was the bond between them.

A month before the birth of the child, Mercy became blind. This happened suddenly and without much warning. A little cold in the eyes, a little redness around them and a total eclipse of sight. If such a disaster had befallen a married wife, looking forward to a happy motherhood, death itself might have seemed a doom more kind. But Mercy took it with a sombre quietness. She was even heard to say that it was just as well. These startling words, repeated to Greta, just told her something of the mystery and misery of Mercy's state. But their full meaning, the whole depth of the shame they came from, were only revealed on the morning after the night on which Mercy's child was born.

They were in the room upstairs, where Mercy herself had been

born less than nineteen years before: a little chamber with the low eaves and the open roof rising to the ridge: a peaceful place with its whitewashed walls and the odor of clean linen. On the pillow of the bed lay the simple face of the girl-mother, with its fair hair hanging loose and its blind eyes closed. Mercy had just awakened from the first deep sleep that comes after all is over, and the long fingers of one of her thin hands were plucking at the white counterpane. In a nervous voice she began to speak. Where was Mrs. Ritson? Greta answered that she was there, and the baby was sleeping on her knee. Anybody else? No, nobody else. Was it morning? Yes, it was eight in the morning, and her father, who had not been to bed, had eaten his breakfast, and lighted his pipe and gone to work. Was the day fine? Very fine. And the sun shining? Yes, shining beautifully. Was the blind down? Yes, the little white blind was down. Then all the room was full of that soft light? Oh, yes, full of it. Except in the corner by the washstand? Well, except in the corner. Was the washstand still there? Why, yes, it was still there. And mother's picture on the wall above it? Oh, dear, yes. And the chest of drawers near the door with the bits of sparkling lead ore on top? Of course. And the texts pinned on to the wall-paper: "Come unto Me"—eh? Yes, they were all there. Then everything was just the same? Oh, yes, everything the same.

"The same," cried Mercy, "everything the same, but, O Lord Jesus, how different!"

The child was awakened by the shrill sound of her voice, and it began to whimper, and Greta to hush it, swaying it on her knee, and calling it by a score of pretty names. Mercy raised her head a moment and listened, then fell back to the pillow and said, "How glad I am I'm blind!"

"Good gracious, Mercy, what are you saying?" said Greta.

"I'm glad I can't see it."

"Mercy!"

"Ah, you're different, Mrs. Ritson. I was thinking of that last night. When your time comes perhaps you'll be afraid you'll die, but you'll never be afraid you'll not. And you'll say to yourself, 'It will be over soon, and then what joy!' That wasn't my case. When I was at the worst I could only think, 'It's dreadful now, but oh, to-morrow all the world will be different.'"

One poor little day changed all this. Toward sunset the child had to be given the breast for the first time. Ah! that mystery of life, that mystery of motherhood, what are the accidents of social law, the big conventions of virtue and vice, of honor and

disgrace, before the touch of the spreading fingers of a babe as they fasten on the mother's breast! Mercy thought no more of her shame.

She had her baby for it, at all events. The world was not utterly desolate. After all, God was very good!

Then came a great longing for sight. She only wished to see her child. That was all. Wasn't it hard that a mother had never seen her own baby? In her darkness she would feel its little nose as it lay asleep beside her, and let her hand play around its mouth and over its eyes and about its ears. Her touch passed over the little one like a look. It was almost as if there were sight in the tips of her fingers.

The child lived to be six months old, and still Mercy had not seen him; a year, and yet she had no hope. Then Greta, in pity of the yearning gaze of the blind girl-face whenever she came and kissed the boy and said how bonny he was, sent to Liverpool for a doctor, that at least they might know for a certainty if Mercy's sight was gone forever. The doctor came. Yes, there was hope. The mischief was cataract on both eyes. Sight might return, but an operation would be necessary. That could not, however, be performed immediately. He would come again in a month, and a colleague with him, and meantime the eyes must be bathed constantly in a liquid which they would send for the purpose.

At first Mercy was beside herself with delight. She plucked up the boy and kissed and kissed him. The whole day long she sang all over the house like a liberated bird. Her face, though it was blind, was like sunshine, for the joyous mouth smiled like eyes. Then suddenly there came a change. She plucked up the boy and kissed him still, but she did not sing and she did not smile. A heavy thought had come to her. Ah! if she should die under the doctor's hands! Was it not better to live in blindness and keep her boy than to try to see him and so lose him altogether? Thus it was with her on St. Peter's Day, when the children of the dale went by at their rush-bearing.

. . . . . .

There was the faint sound of a footstep outside.

"Hark!" said Mercy, half rising from the sconce. "It's Mrs. Ritson's foot."

The man listened. "Nay, lass, there's no foot," said Matthew.

"Yes, she's on the road," said Mercy. Her face showed that pathetic tension of the other senses which is peculiar to the blind. A moment later Greta stepped into the cottage, with a letter in

her hand. "Good-morning, Matthew; I have news for you, Mercy. The doctors are coming to-day."

Mercy's face fell perceptibly. The old man's head dropped lower.

"There, don't be afraid," said Greta, touching her hand caressingly. "It will soon be over. The doctors didn't hurt you before, did they?"

"No, but this time it will be the operation," said Mercy. There was a tremor in her voice.

Greta had lifted the child from the sconce. The little fellow cooed close to her ear; and babbled his inarticulate nothings.

"Only think, when it's all over you will be able to see your darling Ralphie for the first time!"

Mercy's sightless face brightened. "Oh, yes," she said, "and watch him play, and see him spin his tops and chase the butterflies. Oh, that will be very good!"

"Dusta say to-day, Mistress Ritson?" asked Matthew, the big drops standing in his eyes.

"Yes, Matthew; I will stay to see it over, and mind baby, and help a little."

Mercy took the little one from Greta's arms and cried over it, and laughed over it, and then cried and laughed again. "Mama and Ralphie shall play together in the garden, darling; and Ralphie shall see the horses—and the flowers—and the birdies—and mama —yes, mama shall see Ralphie."

II

Two hours later the doctors arrived. They looked at Mercy's eyes, and were satisfied that the time was ripe for the operation. At the sound of their voices, Mercy trembled and turned livid. By a maternal instinct she picked up the child, who was toddling about the floor, and clasped it to her bosom. The little one opened wide his blue eyes at sight of the strangers, and the prattling tongue became quiet.

"Take her to her room, and let her lie on the bed," said one of the doctors to Greta.

A sudden terror seized the young mother. "No, no, no!" she said, in an indescribable accent, and the child cried a little from the pressure to her breast.

"Come, Mercy, dear, be brave for your boy's sake," said Greta.

"Listen to me," said the doctor, quietly but firmly: "You are now quite blind, and you have been in total darkness for a year and a half. We may be able to restore your sight by giving you a few minutes' pain. Will you not bear it?"

Mercy sobbed, and kissed the child passionately.

"Just think, it is quite certain that without an operation you will never regain your sight," continued the doctor. "You have nothing to lose, and everything to gain. Are you satisfied? Come, go away to your room quietly."

"Oh, oh, oh!" sobbed Mercy.

"Just imagine, only a few minutes' pain, and even of that you will scarcely be conscious. Before you know what is doing it will be done."

Mercy clung closer to her child, and kissed it again and yet more fervently.

The doctors turned to each other. "Strange vanity!" muttered the one who had not spoken before. "Her eyes are useless, and yet she is afraid she may lose them."

Mercy's quick ears caught the whispered words. "It is not that," she said, passionately.

"No, gentlemen," said Greta, "you have mistaken her thought. Tell her she runs no danger of her life."

The doctors smiled and laughed a little. "Oh, that's it, eh? Well, we can tell her that with certainty."

Then there was another interchange of half-amused glances.

"Ah, we that be men, sirs, don't know the depth and tenderness of a mother's heart," said old Matthew. And Mercy turned toward him a face that was full of gratitude. Greta took the child out of her arms and hushed it to sleep in another room. Then she brought it back and put it in its cradle that stood in the ingle.

"Come, Mercy," she said, "for the sake of your boy." And Mercy permitted herself to be led from the kitchen.

"So there will be no danger," she said. "I shall not leave my boy. Who said that? The doctor? Oh, good gracious, it's nothing. Only think, I shall live to see him grow to be a great lad."

Her whole face was now radiant.

"It will be nothing. Oh, no, it will be nothing. How silly it was to think that he would live on, and grow up, and be a man, and I lie cold in the churchyard—and me his mother! That was very childish, wasn't it? But, then, I have been so childish since Ralphie came."

"There, lie and be quiet, and it will soon be over," said Greta.

"Let me kiss him first. Do let me kiss him! Only once. You know it's a great risk after all. And if he grew up—and I wasn't here—if—if—"

"There, dear Mercy, you must not cry again. It inflames your eyes, and that can't be good for the doctors."

"No, no, I won't cry. You are very good; everybody is very good. Only let me kiss my little Ralphie—just for the last."

Greta led her back to the side of the cot, and she spread herself over it with outstretched arms, as the mother-bird poises with outstretched wings over her brood. Then she rose, and her face was peaceful and resigned.

The Laird Fisher sat down before the kitchen fire, with one arm on the cradle head. Parson Christian stood beside him. The old charcoal-burner wept in silence, and the good Parson's voice was too thick for the words of comfort that rose to his lips.

The doctors followed into the bedroom. Mercy was lying tranquilly on her bed. Her countenance was without expression. She was busy with her own thoughts. Greta stood by the bedside; anxiety was written in every line of her beautiful, brave face.

"We must give her the gas," said one of the doctors, addressing the other.

Mercy's features twitched.

"Who said that?" she asked nervously.

"My child, you must be quiet," said the doctor in a tone of authority.

"Yes, I will be quiet, very quiet; only don't make me unconscious," she said. "Never mind me; I will not cry. No; if you hurt me I will not cry out. I will not stir. I will do everything you ask. And you shall say how quiet I have been. Only don't let me be insensible."

The doctors consulted together aside, and in whispers.

"Who spoke about the gas? It wasn't you, Mrs. Ritson, was it?"

"You must do as the doctors wish, dear," said Greta in a caressing voice.

"Oh, I will be very good. I will do every little thing. Yes, and I will be so brave. I am a little childish sometimes, but I *can* be brave, can't I?"

The doctors returned to the bedside.

"Very well, we will not use the gas," said one. "You are a brave little woman, after all. There, be still—very still."

One of the doctors was tearing linen into strips for bandages, while the other fixed Mercy's head to suit the light.

There was a faint sound from the kitchen. "Wait," said Mercy. "That is father—he's crying. Tell him not to cry. Say it's nothing."

She laughed a weak little laugh.

"There, he will hear that; go and say it was I who laughed."

Greta left the room on tiptoe. Old Matthew was still sitting over a dying fire, gently rocking the sleeping child.

When Greta returned to the bedroom, Mercy called her, and said, very softly, "Let me hold your hand, Greta—may I say Greta?—there," and her fingers closed on Greta's with a convulsive grasp.

The operation began. Mercy held her breath. She had the stubborn north-country blood in her. Once only a sigh escaped. There was a dead silence.

In two or three minutes the doctor said, "Just another minute, and all will be over."

At the next instant Greta felt her hand held with a grasp of iron.

"Doctor, doctor, I can see you," cried Mercy, and her words came in gusts.

"Be quiet," said the doctor in a stern voice. In half a minute more the linen bandages were being wrapped tightly over Mercy's eyes.

"Doctor, dear doctor, let me see my boy!" cried Mercy.

"Be quiet, I say," said the doctor again.

"Dear doctor, my dear doctor, only one peep—one little peep. I saw your face—let me see my Ralphie's."

"Not yet, it is not safe."

"But only for a moment. Don't put the bandage on for one moment. Just think, doctor, I have never seen my boy; I've seen other people's children, but never once my own, own darling. Oh, dear doctor—"

"You are exciting yourself. Listen to me: if you don't behave yourself now you may never see your child."

"Yes, yes, I will behave myself; I will be very good. Only don't shut me up in darkness again until I see my boy. Greta, bring him to me. Listen, I hear his breathing. Go for my darling! The kind doctor won't be angry with you. Tell him that if I see my child it will cure me. I know it will."

Greta's eyes were swimming in tears.

"Rest quiet, Mercy. Everything may be lost if you disturb yourself now, my dear."

The doctors were wrapping bandage over bandage, and fixing them firmly at the back of their patient's head.

"Now listen again," said one of them: "This bandage must be kept over your eyes for a week."

"A week—a whole week? Oh, doctor, you might as well say forever."

"I say a week. And if you should ever remove it—"

"Not for an instant? Not raise it a very little?"

"If you ever remove it for an instant, or raise it ever so little, you will assuredly lose your sight forever. Remember that."

"Oh, doctor, it is terrible. Why did you not tell me so before? Oh this is worse than blindness! Think of the temptation, and I have never seen my boy!"

The doctor had fixed the bandage, and his voice was less stern, but no less resolute.

"You must obey me," he said; "I will come again this day week, and then you shall see your child, and your father, and this young lady, and everybody. But mind, if you don't obey me, you will never see anything. You will have one glance of your little boy, and then be blind forever, or perhaps—yes, perhaps *die*."

Mercy lay quiet for a moment. Then she said, in a low voice:

"Dear doctor, you must forgive me. I am very wilful, and I promised to be so good. I will not touch the bandage. No, for the sake of my little boy, I will never, never touch it. You shall come yourself and take it off, and then I shall see him."

The doctors went away. Greta remained all that night in the cottage.

"You are happy now, Mercy?" said Greta.

"Oh yes," said Mercy. "Just think, only a week! And he must be so beautiful by this time."

When Greta took the child to her at sunset, there was an ineffable joy in her pale face, and next morning, when Greta awoke, Mercy was singing softly to herself in the sunrise.

III

Greta stayed with Mercy until noon that day, begging, entreating, and finally commanding her to lie quiet in bed, while she herself dressed and fed the child, and cooked and cleaned, in spite of the Laird Fisher's protestations. When all was done, and the old charcoal-burner had gone out on the hills, Greta picked up the little fellow in her arms and went to Mercy's room. Mercy was alert to every sound, and in an instant was sitting up in bed. Her face beamed, her parted lips smiled, her delicate fingers plucked nervously at the counterpane.

"How brightsome it is to-day, Greta," she said. "I'm sure the sun must be shining."

The window was open, and a soft breeze floated through the sun's rays into the room. Mercy inclined her head aside, and added, "Ah, you young rogue, you; you are there, are you? Give him to me, the rascal!" The rogue was set down in his mother's arms, and she proceeded to punish his rascality with a shower of kisses. "How bonny his cheeks must be; they will be just like two ripe apples," and forthwith there fell another shower of kisses. Then she babbled over the little one, and lisped, and stammered, and nodded her head in his face, and blew little puffs of breath into his hair, and tickled him until he laughed and crowed and rolled and threw up his legs; and then she kissed his limbs and extremities in a way that mothers have, and finally imprisoned one of his feet by putting it ankle-deep into her mouth. "Would you ever think a foot could be so tiny, Greta?" she said. And the little one plunged about and clambered laboriously up its mother's breast, and more than once plucked at the white bandage about her head. "No, no, Ralphie must not touch," said Mercy with sudden gravity. "Only think, Ralphie pet, one week—only one—nay, less—only six days now, and then—oh, then—!" A long hug, and the little fellow's boisterous protest against the convulsive pressure abridged the mother's prophecy.

All at once Mercy's manner changed. She turned toward Greta, and said, "I will not touch the bandage, no, never; but if Ralphie tugged at it, and it fell—would that be breaking my promise?"

Greta saw what was in her heart.

"I'm afraid it would, dear," she said, but there was a tremor in her voice.

Mercy sighed audibly.

"Just think, it would be only Ralphie. The kind doctors could not be angry with my little child. I would say, 'It was the boy,' and they would smile and say, 'Ah, that is different.'"

"Give me the little one," said Greta with emotion.

Mercy drew the child closer, and there was a pause.

"I was very wrong, Greta," she said in a low tone. "Oh! you would not think what a fearful thing came into my mind a minute ago. Take my Ralphie. Just imagine, my own innocent baby tempted me."

As Greta reached across the bed to lift the child out of his mother's lap, the little fellow was struggling to communicate, by help of a limited vocabulary, some wondrous intelligence of recent events that somewhat overshadowed his little existence. "Puss—dat," many times repeated, was further explained by one chubby forefinger with its diminutive finger nail pointed to the fat back of the other hand.

"He means that the little cat has scratched him," said Greta. "But bless the mite, he is pointing to the wrong hand."

"Puss—dat," continued the child, and peered up into his mother's sightless face. Mercy was all tears in an instant. She had borne yesterday's operation without a groan, but now the scratch on her child's hand went to her heart like a stab.

"Lie quiet, Mercy," said Greta; "it will be gone to-morrow."

"Go-on," echoed the little chap, and pointed out at the window.

"The darling, how he picks up every word!" said Greta.

"He means the horse," explained Mercy.

"Go-on—man—go-on," prattled the little one, with a child's indifference to all conversation except his own.

"Bless the love, he must remember the doctor and his horse," said Greta.

Mercy was putting her lips to the scratch on the little hand.

"Oh, Greta, I am very childish; but a mother's heart melts like butter."

"Batter," echoed the child, and wriggled out of Greta's arms to the ground, where he forthwith clambered on to the stool, and possessed himself of a slice of bread which lay on the table at the bedside. Then the fair curly head disappeared like a glint of sunlight through the door to the kitchen.

"What shall I care if other mothers see my child? I shall see him too," said Mercy, and she sighed. "Yes," she added, softly, "his hands and his eyes and his feet, and his soft hair."

"Try to sleep an hour or two, dear," said Greta, "and then per-

haps you may get up this afternoon—only *perhaps*, you know, but we'll see."

"Yes, Greta, yes. How kind you are."

"You will be kinder to me some day," said Greta very tenderly.

"How very selfish I am. But then it is so hard not to be selfish when you are a mother. Only fancy, I never think of myself as Mercy now. No, never. I'm just Ralphie's mama. When Ralphie came, Mercy must have died in some way. That's very silly, isn't it? Only it does seem true."

"Man—go-on—batter," was heard from the kitchen, mingled with the patter of tiny feet.

"Listen to him. How tricksome he is! And you should hear him cry 'Oh!' You would say, 'That child has had an eye knocked out.' And then, in a minute, behold he is laughing once more. There, I'm selfish again; but I will make up for it some day, if God is good."

"Yes, Mercy, He *is* good," said Greta.

Her arm rested on the door-jamb, and her head dropped on to it; her eyes swam. Did it seem at that moment as if God had been very good to these two women?

"Greta," said Mercy, and her voice fell to a whisper, "do you think Ralphie is like—anybody?"

"Yes, dear, he is like you."

There was a pause. Then Mercy's hand strayed from under the bedclothes and plucked at Greta's gown.

"Do you think," she asked, in a voice all but inaudible, "that father knows who it is?"

"I can not say—*we* have never told him."

"Nor I—he never asked, never once—only, you know, he gave up his work at the mine, and went back to the charcoal-pit when Ralphie came. But he never said a word."

Greta did not answer. At that moment the bedroom door was pushed open with a little lordly bang, and the great wee man entered with his piece of bread insecurely on one prong of a fork.

"Toas'," he explained complacently, "toas'," and walked up to the empty grate and stretched his arm over the fender at the cold bars.

"Why, there's no fire for toast, you darling goose," said Greta, catching him in her arms, much to his masculine vexation.

Mercy had risen on an elbow, and her face was full of the yearning of the blind. Then she lay back.

"Never mind," she said to herself in a faltering voice, "let me lie quiet and *think* of all his pretty ways."

IV

Greta returned home toward noon, laughing and crying a little to herself as she walked, for she was full of a dear delicious envy. She was thinking that she could take all the shame and all the pain for all the joy of Mercy's motherhood.

God had given Greta no children.

Hugh Ritson came in to their early dinner and she told him how things went at the cottage of the old Laird Fisher. Only once before had she mentioned Mercy or the child, and he looked confused and awkward. After the meal was over he tried to say something which had been on his mind for weeks.

"But if anything should happen after all," he began, "and Mercy should not recover—or if she should ever want to go anywhere—might we not take—would you mind, Greta—I mean it might even help her—you see," he said, breaking down nearly, "there is the child, it's a sort of duty, you know—and then a good home and upbringing—"

"Don't tempt me," said Greta. "I've thought of it a hundred times."

About five o'clock the same evening a knock came to the door, and old Laird Fisher entered. His manner was more than usually solemn and constrained.

"I's coom't to say as ma lass's wee thing is taken badly," he said, "and rayder suddent."

Greta rose from her seat and put on her hat and cloak. She was hastening down the road while the charcoal-burner was still standing in the middle of the floor.

When Greta reached the old charcoal-burner's cottage, the little one was lying in a drowsy state in Mercy's arms. Its breathing seemed difficult; sometimes it started in terror; it was feverish and suffered thirst. The mother's wistful face was bent down on it with an indescribable expression. There were only the trembling lips to tell of the sharp struggle that was going on within. But the yearning for a sight of the little flushed countenance, the tearless appeal for but one glimpse of the drowsy little eyes, the half-articulate cry of a mother's heart against the fate that made the child she had suckled at her breast a stranger, whose very features she might not know—all this was written in that blind face.

"Is he pale?" said Mercy. "Is he sleeping? He does not talk now, but only starts and cries, and sometimes coughs."

"When did this begin?" asked Greta.

"Toward four o'clock. He had been playing, and I noticed that he breathed heavily, and then he came to me to be nursed. Is he awake now? Listen."

The little one in its restless drowsiness was muttering faintly, "Man—go-on—batter—toas'."

"The darling is talking in his sleep, isn't he?" said Mercy.

Then there was a ringing, brassy cough.

"It is croup," thought Greta.

She closed the window, lighted a fire, placed the kettle so that the steam might enter the room, then wrung flannels out of hot water, and wrapped them about the child's neck. She stayed all that night at the cottage, and sat up with the little one and nursed it. Mercy could not be persuaded to go to bed, but she was very quiet. It had not yet taken hold of her that the child was seriously ill. He was drowsy and a little feverish, his pulse beat fast and he coughed hard sometimes, but he would be better in the morning. Oh, yes, he would soon be well again, and tearing up the flowers in the garden.

Toward midnight the pulse fell rapidly, the breathing became quieter, and the whole nature seemed to sink. Mercy listened with her ear bent down at the child's mouth, and a smile of ineffable joy spread itself over her face.

"Bless him, he is sleeping so clamly," she said.

Greta did not answer.

"The 'puss' and the 'man' don't darken his little life so much now," continued Mercy cheerily.

"No, dear," said Greta, in as strong a voice as she could summon.

"All will be well with my darling boy soon, will it not?"

"Yes, dear," said Greta, with a struggle.

Happily Mercy could not read the other answer in her face.

Mercy had put her sensitive fingers on the child's nose, and was touching him lightly about the mouth.

"Greta," she said in a startled whisper, "does he look pinched?"

"A little," said Greta quietly.

"And his skin—is it cold and clammy?"

"We must give him another hot flannel," said Greta.

Mercy sat at the bedside, and said nothing for an hour. Then all at once, and in a strange, harsh voice, she said:

"I wish God had not made Ralphie so winsome."

Greta started at the words, but made no answer.

The daylight came early. As the first gleams of gray light came in at the window, Greta turned to where Mercy sat in silence. It was a sad face that she saw in the mingled yellow light of the dying lamp and the gray of the dawn.

Mercy spoke again.

"Greta, do you remember what Mistress Branthet said when her baby died last back end gone twelvemonth?"

Greta looked up quickly at the bandaged eyes.

"What?" she asked.

"Well, Parson Christian tried to comfort her and said: 'Your baby is now an angel in Paradise,' and she turned on him with: 'Shaf on your angels—I want none on 'em—I want my little girl.'"

Mercy's voice broke into a sob.

Toward ten o'clock the doctor came. He had been detained. Very sorry to disoblige Mrs. Ritson, but fact was old Mr. de Broadthwaite had an attack of lumbago, complicated by a bout of toothache, and everybody knew he was most exacting. Young person's baby ill? Feverish, restless, starts in its sleep, and cough? Ah, croupy cough—yes, croup, true croup, not spasmodic. Let him see, how old? A year and a half? Ah, bad, very. Most frequent in second year of infancy. Dangerous, highly so. Forms a membrane that occludes air-passages. Often ends in convulsions, and child suffocates. Sad, very. Let him see again. How long since the attack began? Yesterday at four. Ah, far gone, far. The great man soon vanished, leaving behind him a harmless preparation of aconite and ipecacuanha.

Mercy had heard all, and her pent-up grief broke out in sobs.

"Oh, to think I shall hear my Ralphie no more, and to know his white cold face is looking up from a coffin, while other children are playing in the sunshine and chasing the butterflies! No, no, it can not be; God will not let it come to pass; I will pray to Him and He will save my child. Why, He can do anything, and He has all the world. What is my little baby boy to Him? He will not let it be taken from me."

Greta's heart was too full for speech. But she might weep in silence, and none there would know. Mercy stretched across the bed, and, tenderly folding the child in her arms, she lifted him up, and then went down on her knees.

"Merciful Father," she said in a childish voice of sweet confidence, "this is my baby, my Ralphie, and I love him so dearly. You would never think how much I love him. But he is ill, and doctor says he may die. Oh, dear Father, only think what it

would be to say, 'His little face is gone.' And then I have never seen him. You will not take him away until his mother sees him. So soon, too. Only five days more. Why, it is quite close. Not to-morrow, nor the next day, nor the next, but the day after that."

She put in many another childlike plea, and then rose with a smile on her pale lips and replaced the little one on his pillow.

"How patient he is," she said. "He can't say 'Thank you,' but I'm sure his eyes are speaking. Let me feel." She put her finger lightly on the child's lids. "No, they are shut; he must be sleeping. Oh, dear, he sleeps very much. Is he gaining color? How quiet he is. If he would only say, 'Mama!' How I wish I could see him!"

She was very quiet for a while, and then plucked at Greta's gown suddenly.

"Greta," she said eagerly, "something tells me that if I could only see Ralphie I should save him."

Greta started up in terror. "No, no, no; you must not think of it," she said.

"But something whispered it. It must have been God himself. You know we ought to obey God always."

"Mercy, it was not God who said that. It was your own heart. You must not heed it."

"I'm sure it was God," said Mercy. "And I heard it quite plain."

"Mercy, my darling, think what you are saying. Think what it is you wish to do. If you do it you will be blind forever."

"But I shall have saved my Ralphie."

"No, no; you will not."

"Will he not be saved, Greta?"

"Only our heavenly Father knows."

"Well, He whispered it in my heart. And, as you say, He knows best."

Greta was almost distraught with fear. The noble soul in her would not allow her to appeal to Mercy's gratitude against the plea of maternal love. But she felt that all her happiness hung on that chance. If Mercy regained her sight, all would be well with her and hers; but if she lost it the future must be a blank.

The day wore slowly on, and the child sank and sank. At evening the old charcoal-burner returned, and went into the bedroom. He stood a moment and looked down at the pinched little face, and when the child's eyes opened drowsily for a moment he put his withered forefinger into its palm; but there was no longer a responsive clasp of the chubby hand.

The old man's lips quivered behind his white beard.

"It were a winsome wee thing," he said faintly, and then turned away.

He left his supper untouched, and went into the porch. There he sat on a bench and whittled a blackthorn stick. The sun was sinking over the head of the Eal Crag; the valley lay deep in a purple haze; only the bald top of Cat Bells stood out bright in the glory of the passing day. A gentle breeze came up from the south, and the young corn chattered with its multitudinous tongues in a field below. The dog lay at the charcoal-burner's feet, blinking in the sun and snapping lazily at a buzzing fly.

The little life within was ebbing away. No longer racked by the ringing cough, the loud breathing became less frequent and more harsh. Mercy lifted the child from the bed, and sat with it before the fire. Greta saw its eyes open, and at the same moment she saw the lips move slightly, but she heard nothing.

"He is calling his mama," said Mercy, with her ear bent toward the child's mouth.

There was a silence for a long time. Mercy pressed the child to her breast; its close presence seemed to soothe her.

Greta stood and looked down; she saw the little lips move once more, but again she heard no sound.

"He is calling his mama," repeated Mercy wistfully, "and oh, he seems such a long way off."

Once again the little lips moved.

"He is calling me," said Mercy, listening intently; and she grew restless and excited. "He is going away. I can hear him. He is far off. Ralphie, Ralphie!" She had lifted the child up to her face. "Ralphie, Ralphie!" she cried.

"Give me the baby, Mercy," said Greta.

But the mother clung to it with a convulsive grasp.

"Ralphie, Ralphie, Ralphie . . ."

There was a sudden flash of some white thing. In an instant the bandage had fallen from Mercy's head, and she was peering down into the child's face with wild eyes.

"Ralphie, Ralphie! . . . *Hugh!*" she cried.

The mother had seen her babe at last, and in that instant she had recognized the features of its father.

At the next moment the angel of God passed through that troubled house, and the child lay dead at the mother's breast.

Mercy saw it all, and her impassioned mood left her. She rose to her feet quietly, and laid the little one in the bed. There was

never a sigh more, never a tear. Only her face was ashy pale, and her whitening lips quivered.

"Greta," she said, very slowly, "good-by! All is over now."

She spoke of herself as if her days were already ended and past; as if her own orb of life had been rounded by the brief span of the little existence that lay finished on the bed.

"When they come in the morning early—very early—and find us here, my boy and me, don't let them take him away from me, Greta. We should go together—yes, both together; that's only right, with Ralphie at my bosom."

The bandage lay at her feet. Her eyes were very red and heavy. Their dim light seemed to come from far away.

"Only that," she said, and her voice softened, "My Ralphie is in heaven."

Then she hid her face in her hands, and cried out loud, "But I prayed to God that I might see my child on earth. Oh, how I prayed! And God heard my prayer and answered it—but see! *I saw him die.*"

END OF "THE BLIND MOTHER"

THE LAST CONFESSION

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THE LAST CONFESSION

I

FATHER, do not leave me. Wait! only a little longer. You can not absolve me? I am not penitent? How *can* I be penitent? I do not regret it? How *can* I regret it? I would do it again? How could I help *but* do it again?

Yes, yes, I know, I know! Who knows it so well as I? It is written in the tables of God's law: *Thou shalt do no murder!* But was it murder? Was it crime? Blood? Yes, it was the spilling of blood. Blood will have blood, you say. But is there no difference? Hear me out. Let me speak. It is hard to remember all now—and here—lying here—but listen—only listen. Then tell me if I did wrong. No, tell me if God Himself will not justify me—ay, justify me—though I outraged His edict. Blasphemy? Ah, father, do not go! Father!—

Speak, my son. I will listen. It is my duty. Speak.

It is less than a year since my health broke down, but the soul lives fast, and it seems to me like a lifetime. I had overworked myself miserably. My life as a physician in London had been a hard one, but it was not my practise that had wrecked me. How to perform that operation on the throat was the beginning of my trouble. You know what happened. I mastered my problem, and they called the operation by my name. It has brought me fame; it has made me rich; it has saved a thousand lives, and will save ten thousand more, and yet I—I—for taking one life—one—under conditions—

Father, bear with me. I will tell all. My nerves are burned out. Gloom, depression, sleeplessness, prostration, sometimes collapse, a consuming fire within, a paralyzing frost without—you know what it is—we call it neurasthenia.

I watched the progress of my disease and gave myself the customary treatment. Hygiene, diet, drugs, electricity, I tried them all. But neither dumbbells nor Indian clubs, neither walking nor riding, neither liberal food nor doses of egg and brandy, neither musk nor ergot nor antipyrin, neither faradization nor galvanization availed to lift the black shades that hung over me day and night, and made the gift of life a mockery. I knew why. My work

possessed me like a fever. I could neither do it to my content nor leave it undone. I was drawing water in a sieve.

My wife sent for Gull. Full well I knew what he would advise. It was rest. I must take six months' absolute holiday, and, in order to cut myself off entirely from all temptations to mental activity, I must leave London and go abroad. Change of scene, of life, and of habit, new peoples, new customs, new faiths, and a new climate—these separately and together, with total cessation of my usual occupations, were to banish a long series of functional derangements which had for their basis the exhaustion of the sympathetic nervous system.

I was loth to go. Looking back upon my condition, I see that my reluctance was justified. To launch a creature who was all nerves into the perpetual, if trifling, vexations of travel was a mistake, a folly, a madness. But I did not perceive this; I was thinking only of my home and the dear souls from whom I must be separated. During the seven years of our married life my wife had grown to be more than the object of my love. That gentle soothing, that soft healing which the mere presence of an affectionate woman who is all strength and courage may bring to a man who is wasted by work or worry, my wife's presence had long brought to me, and I shrank from the thought of scenes where she could no longer move about me, meeting my wishes and anticipating my wants.

This was weakness, and I knew it; but I had another weakness which I did not know. My boy, a little son of six years of age the day before I set sail, was all the world to me. Paternal love may eat up all the other passions. It was so in my case. The tyranny of my affection for my only child was even more constant and unrelenting than the tyranny of my work. Nay, the two were one: for out of my instinct as a father came my strength as a doctor. The boy had suffered from a throat trouble from his birth. When he was a babe I delivered him from a fierce attack of it, and when he was four I brought him back from the jaws of death. Thus twice I had saved his life, and each time that life had become dearer to me. But too well I knew that the mischief was beaten down, and not conquered. Some day it would return with awful virulence. To meet that terror I wrought by day and night. No slave ever toiled so hard. I denied myself rest, curtailed my sleep, and stole from tranquil reflection and repose half-hours and quarter-hours spent in the carriage going from patient to patient. The attack might come suddenly, and I must be prepared. I was working against time.

You know what happened. The attack did not come; my boy continued well, but my name became known and my discovery established. The weakness of my own child had given the bent to my studies. If I had mastered my subject it was my absorbing love of my little one that gave me the impulse and direction.

But I had paid my penalty. My health was a wreck, and I must leave everything behind me. If it had been possible to take my wife and boy along with me, how different the end might have been! Should I be lying here now—here on this bed—with you, father, you?—

We spent our boy's birthday with what cheer we could command. For my wife it seemed to be a day of quiet happiness, hallowed by precious memories—the dearest and most delicious that a mother ever knew—of the babyhood of her boy—his pretty lisp, his foolish prattle, his funny little ways and sayings—and sweetened by the anticipation of the health that was to return to me as the result of rest and change. The child himself was bright and gamesome, and I for my part gave way to some reckless and noisy jollity.

Thus the hours passed until bedtime, and then, as I saw the little fellow tucked up in his crib, it crossed my mind for a moment that he looked less well than usual. Such fancies were common to me, and I knew from long experience that it was folly to give way to them. To do so at that time must have been weakness too pitiful for my manhood. I had already gone far enough for my own self-respect. To my old colleague and fellow-student, Granville Wenman, I had given elaborate instructions for all possible contingencies.

If *this* happened he was to do *that;* if *that* happened he was to do *this.* In case of serious need he was to communicate with me by the swiftest means available, for neither the width of the earth nor the wealth of the world, nor the loss of all chances of health or yet life, should keep me from hastening home if the one hope of my heart was in peril. Wenman had smiled a little as in pity of the morbidity that ran out to meet so many dangers. I did not heed his good-natured compassion or contempt, whatever it was, for I knew he had no children. I had reconciled myself in some measure to my absence from home, and before my little man was awake in the morning I was gone from the house.

It had been arranged that I should go to Morocco. Wenman had suggested that country out of regard to the freshness of its life and people. The East in the West, the costumes of Arabia, the faiths of Mohammed and of Moses, a primitive form of govern-

ment, and a social life that might have been proper to the land of Canaan in the days of Abraham—such had seemed to him and others to be an atmosphere of novelty that was likely to bring spring and elasticity to the overstretched mind and nerves of a victim of the civilization of our tumultuous century. But not in all the world could fate have ferreted out for me a scene more certain to develop the fever and fret of my natural temperament. Had the choice fallen on any other place, any dead or dying country, any corner of God's earth but that blighted and desolate land—

Ah! bear with me, bear with me.

I know it, my son. It is near to my own country. My home is in Spain. I came to your England from Seville. Go on.

I sailed to Gibraltar by a P. and O. steamer from Tilbury, and the tender that took my wife back to the railway pier left little in my new condition to interest me. You know what it is to leave home in search of health. If hope is before you, regret is behind. When I stood on the upper deck that night, alone, and watched the light of the Eddystone dying down over the dark waters, it seemed to me that success had no solace, and fame no balm, and riches no safety or content. One reflection alone sufficed to reconcile me to where I was—the work that had brought me there was done neither for fame nor for riches, but at the prompting of the best of all earthly passions—or what seemed to be the best.

Three days passed, and beyond casual words I had spoken to no one on the ship. But on the fourth day, as we sailed within sight of Finisterre in a calm sea, having crossed the Bay with comfort, the word went round that a storm-signal was hoisted on the cape. No one who has gone through an experience such as that is likely to forget it. Everybody on deck, the blanched faces, the hushed voices, the quick whispers, the eager glances around, the interrogations of the officers on duty, and their bantering answers belied by their anxious looks, then the darkening sky, the freshening breeze, the lowering horizon, the tingling gloomy atmosphere creeping down from the mastheads, and the air of the whole ship, above and below, charged, as it were, with sudden electricity. It is like nothing else in life except the bugle-call in camp, telling those who lie smoking and drinking about the fires that the enemy is coming, and is near.

I was standing on the quarterdeck watching the Lascars stowing sails, battening down the hatches, clewing the lines, and making everything snug, when a fellow-passenger whom I had not observed before stepped up and spoke. His remark was a casual one, and it has gone from my memory. I think it had reference to the native

seamen, and was meant as a jest upon their lumbering slowness, which suggested pitiful thoughts to him of what their capacity must be in a storm. But the air of the man much more than his words aroused and arrested my attention. It was that of one whose spirits had been quickened by the new sense of danger. He laughed, his eyes sparkled, his tongue rolled out his light remarks with a visible relish. I looked at the man and saw that he had the soul of a war-horse. Tall, slight, dark, handsome, with bushy beard, quivering nostrils, mobile mouth, and eyes of fire, alive in every fibre, and full of unconquerable energy. He appeared to be a man of thirty to thirty-five, but proved to be no more than four-and-twenty. I learned afterward that he was an American, and was traveling for love of adventure.

That night we flew six hours before the storm, but it overtook our ship at last. What befell us then in the darkness of that rock-bound coast I did not know until morning. Can you believe it? I took my usual dose of a drug prescribed to me for insomnia, and lay down to sleep. When I went up on deck in the late dawn of the following day—the time was spring—the wind had slackened, and the ship was rolling and swinging along in a sea that could not be heard above the beat and thud of the engines. Only the memory of last night's tempest lay around in sullen wave and sky—only there, and in the quarters down below of the native seamen of our ship.

The first face I encountered was that of the American. He had been on deck all night, and he told me what had happened. Through the dark hours the storm had been terrible, and when the first dead light of dawn had crept across from the east the ship had been still tossing in great white billows. Just then a number of Lascars had been ordered aloft on some urgent duty—I know not what—and a sudden gust had swept one of them from a cross-tree into the sea. Efforts had been made to rescue him, the engines had been reversed, boats put out and life-buoys thrown into the water, but all in vain. The man had been swept away; he was gone and the ship had steamed on.

The disaster saddened me inexpressibly. I could see the Lascar fall from the rigging, catch the agonizing glance of the white eyes in his black face as he was swept past on the crest of a wave, and watch his outstretched arms as he sank to his death down and down and down. It seemed to me an iniquity that while this had happened I had slept. Perhaps the oversensitive condition of my nerves was at fault, but indeed I felt that, in his way, in his degree, within the measure of his possibilities, that poor fellow of another skin,

another tongue, with whom I had exchanged no word of greeting, had that day given his life for my life.

How much of such emotion I expressed at the time it is hard to remember now, but that the American gathered the bent of my feelings was clear to me by the pains he was at to show that they were uncalled for, and unnatural, and false. What was life? I had set too great a store by it. The modern reverence for life was eating away the finest instincts of man's nature. Life was not the most sacred of our possessions. Duty, justice, truth, these were higher things.

So he talked that day and the next until, from thoughts of the loss of the Lascar, we had drifted far into wider and more perilous speculations. The American held to his canon. War was often better than peace, and open massacre than corrupt tranquillity. We wanted some of the robust spirit of the Middle Ages in these our piping days. The talk turned on the persecution of the Jews in Russia. The American defended it—a stern people was purging itself of an alien element which, like an interminate tapeworm, had been preying on its vitals. The remedy was drastic but necessary; life was lost, but also life was saved.

Then coming to closer quarters we talked of murder. The American held to the doctrine of Sterne. It was a hard case that the laws of the modern world should not have made any manner of difference between murdering an honest man and only executing a scoundrel. These things should always be rated *ad valorem*. As for blood spilled in self-defense, it was folly to talk of it as crime. Even the laws of my own effeminate land justified the man who struck down the arm that was raised to kill him; and the mind that reckoned such an act as an offense was morbid and diseased.

Such opinions were repugnant to me, and I tried to resist them. There was a sanctity about human life which no man should dare to outrage. God gave it, and only God should take it away. As for the government of the world, let it be for better or for worse, it was in God's hands, and God required the help of no man.

My resistance was useless. The American held to his doctrine; it was good to take life in a good cause, and if it was good for the nation, it was good for the individual man. The end was all.

I fenced these statements with what force I could command, and I knew not how strongly my adversary had assailed me. Now, I know too well that his opinions sank deep into my soul. Only too well I know it now—now that—

We arrived at Gibraltar the following morning, and going up

on deck in the empty void of air that follows on the sudden stopping of a ship's engines, I found the American, amid a group of swarthy Gibraltarians, bargaining for a boat to take him to the Mole. It turned out that he was going to Morocco also, and we hired a boat together.

The morning was clear and cold; the great broad rock looked whiter and starker and more like a gigantic oyster-shell than ever against the blue of the sky. There would be no steamer for Tangier until the following day, and we were to put up at the Spanish hotel called the Calpe.

Immediately on landing I made my way to the post-office to despatch a telegram home announcing my arrival, and there I found two letters, which, having come overland, arrived in advance of me. One of them was from Wenman, telling me that he had called at Wimpole Street the morning after my departure and found all well at my house; and also enclosing a resolution of thanks and congratulation from my colleagues of the College of Surgeons in relation to my recent labors, which were said to be "memorable in the cause of humanity and science."

The other letter was from my wife, a sweet, affectionate little note, cheerful yet tender, written on her return from Tilbury, hinting that the dear old house looked just a trifle empty and as if somehow it missed something, but that our boy was up and happy with a new toy that I had left for him as a consolation on his awakening—a great elephant that worked its trunk and roared. "I have just asked our darling," wrote my wife, "what message he would like to send you. 'Tell papa,' he answers, 'I'm all right, and Jumbo's all right, and is he all right, and will he come werry quick, and see him grunting?'"

That night at the Calpe I had some further talk with the American. Young as he was he had been a great Eastern traveler. Egypt, Arabia, Syria, the Holy Land—he knew them all. For his forthcoming sojourn in Morocco he had prepared himself with elaborate care. The literature of travel in Barbary is voluminous, but he had gone through the best of it. With the faith of Islam he had long been familiar. and of the corrupt and tyrannical form of government of Mulai el Hassan and his kaids and kadis he had an intimate knowledge. He had even studied the language of the Moorish people—the Moroccan Arabic, which is a dialect of the language of the Koran—and so that he might hold intercourse with the Sephardic Jews also, who people the Mellahs of Morocco, he had mastered the Spanish language as well.

This extensive equipment, sufficient to start a crusade or to

make a revolution, was meant to do more than provide him with adventure. His intention was to see the country and its customs, to observe the manners of the people and the ordinances of their religion. "I shall get into the palaces and the prisons of the Kasbahs," he said; "yes, and the mosques and the saints' houses, and the harems also."

Little as I knew then of the Moors and their country, I foresaw the dangers of such an enterprise, and I warned him against it. "You will get yourself into awkward corners," I said.

"Yes," he said, "and I shall get myself out of them."

I remembered his doctrine propounded on the ship, and I saw that he was a man of resolution, but I said, "Remember, you are going to the land of this people for amusement alone. It is not necessity that thrusts you upon their prejudice, their superstition, their fanaticism."

"True," he said, "but if I get into trouble among them it will not be my amusements but my liberty or my life that will be in danger."

"Then in such a case you will stick at nothing to plow your way out?"

"Nothing."

I laughed, for my mind refused to believe him, and we laughed noisily together, with visions of bloody daggers before the eyes of both.

Father, my *heart* believed: silently, secretly, unconsciously, it drank in the poison of his thought—drank it in—ay—

Next day, about noon, we sailed for Tangier. Our ship was the "Jackal," a little old iron steam-tug, battered by time and tempest, clamped and stayed at every side, and just holding together as by the grace of God. The storm which we had outraced from Finisterre had now doubled Cape St. Vincent, and the sea was rolling heavily in the Straits. We saw nothing of this until we had left the bay and were standing out from Tarifa; nor would it be worthy of mention now but that it gave me my first real understanding of the tremendous hold that the faith or the fanaticism of the Moorish people—call it what you will—has upon their characters and lives.

The channel at that point is less than twenty miles wide, but we were more than five hours crossing it. Our little crazy craft labored terribly in the huge breakers that swept inward from the Atlantic. Pitching until the foredeck was covered, rolling until her boats dipped in the water, creaking, shuddering, leaping, she had enough to do to keep afloat.

With the American I occupied the bridge between the paddle-boxes, which served as a saloon for first-class passengers; and below us in the open hold of the after-deck a number of Moors sat huddled together among cattle and sheep and baskets of fowl. They were Pilgrims, Hadjis, returning from Mecca by way of Gibraltar, and their behavior during the passage was marvelous in its callousness to the sense of peril. They wrangled, quarreled, snarled at each other, embraced, kissed, laughed together, made futile attempts to smoke their keef-pipes, and quarreled, barked, and bleated again.

"Surely," I said, "these people are either wondrously brave or they have no sense of the solemnity of death."

"Neither," said the American; "they are merely fatalists by virtue of their faith. 'If it is not now, it is to come; if it is not to come then it is now.'"

"There is a sort of bravery in that," I answered.

"And cowardice, too," said the American.

The night had closed in when we dropped anchor by the ruins of the Mole at Tangier, and I saw no more of the white town than I had seen of it from the Straits. But if my eyes failed in the darkness my other senses served me only too well. The shrieking and yelping of the boatloads of Moors and negroes who clambered aboard to relieve us of our luggage, the stench of the town sewers that emptied into the bay—these were my first impressions of the gateway to the home of Islam.

The American went through the turmoil with composure and an air of command, and having seen to my belongings as well as his own, passing them through the open office at the water-gate, where two solemn Moors in white sat by the light of candles, in the receipt of customs, he parted from me at the foot of the street that begins with the Grand Mosque, and is the main artery of the town, for he had written for rooms to the hotel called the Villa de France, and I, before leaving England, had done the same to the hotel called the Continental.

Thither I was led by a bare-footed courier in white jellab and red tarboosh, amid sights and sounds of fascinating strangeness: the low drone of men's voices singing their evening prayers in the mosques, the tinkling of the bells of men selling water out of goats' skins, the "Allah" of blind beggars crouching at the gates, the "Arrah" of the mule drivers, and the hooded shapes going by in the gloom or squatting in the red glare of the cafés without windows or doors and open to the streets.

I met the American in the Sôk—the market-place—the follow-

ing day, and he took me up to his hotel to see some native costumes which he had bought by way of preparations for his enterprise. They were haiks and soolhams, jellabs, kaftans, slippers, rosaries, korans, sashes, satchels, turbans, and tarbooshes—blue, white, yellow, and red—all right and none too new, for he had purchased them not at the bazaars, but from the son of a learned Moor, a Tàleb, who had been cast into a prison by a usurer Jew.

"In these," said he, "I mean to go everywhere, and I'll defy the devil himself to detect me."

"Take care," I said, "take care."

He laughed and asked me what my own plans were. I told him that I would remain in Tangier until I received letters from home, and then push on toward Fez.

"I'll see you there," he said; "but if I do not hail you, please do not know me. Good-by."

"Good-by," I said, and so we parted.

I stayed ten days longer in Tangier, absorbed in many reflections, of which the strangest were these two: first, the Moors were the most religious people in the world, and next, that they were the most wickedly irreligious and basely immoral race on God's earth. I was prompted to the one by observations of the large part which Allah appears to play in all affairs of Moorish life, and to the other by clear proof of the much larger part which the devil enacts in Allah's garments. On the one side prayers, prayers, prayers, the moodden, the moodden, the moodden, the mosque, the mosque, the mosque. "Allah" from the mouths of the beggars, "Allah" from the lips of the merchants, "Mohammed" on the inscriptions at the gate, the "Koran" on the scarfs hung out at the bazaars and on the satchels hawked in the streets. And on the other side shameless lying, cheating, usury, buying and selling of justice, cruelty and inhumanity; raw sores on the backs of the asses, blood in the streets, blood, blood, blood everywhere and secret corruption indescribable.

Nevertheless I concluded that my nervous malady must have given me the dark glasses through which everything looked so foul, and I resolved, in the interests of health, to push on toward Fez as soon as letters arrived from home assuring me that all were well and happy there.

But no letters came, and at the arrival of every fresh mail from Cadiz and from Gibraltar my impatience increased. At length I decided to wait no longer, and, leaving instructions that my letters should be sent on after me to the capital, I called on the English Consul for such official documents as were needful for my journey.

When these had been produced from the Kasbah, and I was equipped for travel, the Consul inquired of me how I liked the Moors and their country. I described my conflicting impressions, and he said both were right in their several ways.

"The religion of the Moor," said he, "is genuine of its kind, though it does not put an end to the vilest Government on earth and the most loathsome immoralities ever practised by man. Islam is a sacred thing to him. He is proud of it, jealous of it, and prepared to die for it. Half his hatred of the unbeliever is fear that the Nazarene or the Jew is eager to show his faith some dishonor. And that," added the Consul, "reminds me to offer you one word of warning: avoid the very shadow of offense to the religion of these people; do not pry into their beliefs; do not take note of their ordinances; pass their mosques and saints' houses with downcast eyes, if need be; in a word, let Islam alone."

I thanked him for his counsel, and, remembering the American, I inquired what the penalty would be if a foreign subject offended the religion of this people. The Consul lifted his eyebrows and shoulders together, with an eloquence of reply that required no words.

"But might not a stranger," I asked, "do so unwittingly?"

"Truly," he answered, "and so much the worse for his ignorance."

"Is British life, then," I said, "at the mercy of the first ruffian with a dagger? Is there no power in solemn treaties?"

"What are treaties," he said, "against fanaticism? Give the one a wide berth and you'll have small need for the other."

After that he told me something of certain claims just settled for long imprisonment inflicted by the Moorish authorities on men trading under the protection of the British flag. It was an abject story of barbarous cruelty, broken health, shattered lives, and wrecked homes, atoned for after weary procrastination, in the manner of all Oriental courts, by a sorry money payment. The moral of it all was conveyed by the Consul in the one word with which he parted from me at his gate. "Respect the fanaticism of these fanatics," he said, "as you would value your liberty or your life, and keep out of a Moorish prison—remember that, remember that!"

I *did* remember it. Every day of my travels I remembered it. I remembered it at the most awful moment of my life. If I had not remembered it then, should I be lying here now with that—with *that*—behind me! Ah, wait, wait!

Little did I expect when I left the Consul to light so soon upon

a terrible illustration of his words. With my guide and interpreter, a Moorish soldier lent to me by the authorities in return for two pesetas (one shilling and ninepence) a day, I strolled into the greater Sôk, the market-place outside the walls. It was Friday, the holy day of the Moslems, somewhere between one and two o'clock in the afternoon, when the body of the Moors having newly returned from their one-hour observances in the mosques, had resumed, according to their wont, their usual occupations. The day was fine and warm, a bright sun was shining, and the Sôk at the time when we entered it was a various and animated scene.

Dense crowds of hooded figures, clad chiefly in white—soiled or dirty white—men in jellabs, women enshrouded in blankets, barefooted girls, boys with shaven polls, water-carriers with their tinkling bells, snake-charmers. story-tellers, jugglers, preachers, and then donkeys, nosing their way through the throng, mules lifting their necks above the people's heads, and camels munching oats and fighting—it was a wilderness of writhing forms and a babel of shrieking noises.

With my loquacious Moor I pushed my way along past booths and stalls until I came to a whitewashed structure with a white flag floating over it, that stood near the middle of the market-place. It was a roofless place, about fifteen feet square, and something like a little sheepfold, but having higher walls. Through the open doorway I saw an inner enclosure, out of which a man came forward. He was a wild-eyed creature in tattered garments, and dirty, dishevelled, and malevolent of face.

"See," said my guide, "see, my lord, a Moorish saint's house. Look at the flag. So shall my lord know a saint's house. Here rest the bones of Sidi Gali, and that is the saint that guards them. A holy man, yes, a holy man. Moslems pay him tribute. Sacred place, yes, sacred. No Nazarene may enter it. But Moselms, yes, Moslems may fly here for sanctuary. Life to the Moslem, death to the Nazarene. So it is."

My soldier was rattling on in this way when I saw coming in the sunlight down the hillside of which the Sôk is the foot a company of some eight or ten men, whose dress and complexion were unlike those of the people gathered there. They were a band of warlike persons, swarthy, tall, lithe, sinewy, with heads clean shaven save for one long lock that hung from the crown, each carrying a gun with barrel of prodigious length upon his shoulder, and also armed with a long naked Reefian knife stuck in the scarf that served him for a belt.

They were Berbers, the descendants of the race that peopled Barbary before the Moors set foot in it, between whom and the Moors there is a long-continued, suppressed, but ineradicable enmity. From their mountain homes these men had come to the town that day on their pleasure or their business, and as they entered it they were at no pains to conceal their contempt for the townspeople and their doings.

Swaggering along with long strides, they whooped and laughed and plowed their way through the crowd over bread and vegetables spread out on the ground, and the people fell back before them with muttered curses until they were come near to the saint's house, beside which I myself with my guide was standing. Then I saw that the keeper of the saint's house, the half-distraught creature whom I had just observed, was spitting out at them some bitter and venomous words.

Clearly they all heard him, and most of them laughed derisively and pushed on. But one of the number—a young Berber with eyes of fire—drew up suddenly and made some answer in hot and rapid words. The man of the saint's house spoke again, showing his teeth as he did so in a horrible grin; and at the next instant, almost quicker than my eyes could follow the swift movement of his hands, the Berber had plucked his long knife from his belt and plunged it into the keeper's breast.

I saw it all. The man fell at my feet, and was dead in an instant. In another moment the police of the market had laid hold of the murderer, and he was being hauled off to his trial. "Come," whispered my guide, and he led me by short cuts through the narrow lanes to the Kasbah.

In an open alcove of the castle I found two men in stainless blue jellabs and spotless white turbans, squatting on rush mats at either foot of the horse-shoe arch. These were the judges, the Kadi and his Khalifa, sitting in session in the hall of justice.

There was a tumult of many voices and of hurrying feet; and presently the police entered, holding their prisoner between them, and followed by a vast concourse of townspeople. I held my ground in front of the alcove; the Berber was brought up near to my side, and I saw and heard all.

"This man," said one of the police, "killed so-and-so, of Sidi Gali's saint's house."

"When?" said the Kadi.

"This moment," said the police.

"How?" said the Kadi.

"With this knife," said the police.

The knife, stained, and still wet, was handed to the judge. He shook it, and asked the prisoner one question: "Why?"

Then the Berber flung himself on his knees—his shaven head brushed my hand—and began to plead extenuating circumstances. "It is true, my lord, I killed him, but he called me dog and infidel, and spat at me—"

The Kadi gave back the knife and waved his hand. "Take him away," he said.

That was all, as my guide interpreted it. "Come," he whispered again, and he led me by a passage into a sort of closet where a man lay on a mattress. This was the porch to the prison, and the man on the mattress was the jailer. In one wall there was a low door, barred and clamped with iron, and having a round peephole grated across.

At the next instant the police brought in their prisoner. The jailer rattled a big key in the lock, the low door swung open, I saw within a dark den full of ghostly figures dragging chains at their ankles; a foul stench came out of it, the prisoner bent his head and was pushed in, the door slammed back—and that was the end. Everything occurred in no more time than it takes to tell it.

"Is that all his trial?" I asked.

"All," said my guide.

"How long will he lie there?"

"Until death."

"But," I said, "I have heard that a Kadi of your country may be bribed to liberate a murderer."

"Ah, my lord is right," said my guide, "but not the murderer of a saint."

Less than five minutes before I had seen the stalwart young Berber swaggering down the hillside in the afternoon sunshine. Now he was in the gloom of the noisome dungeon, with no hope of ever again looking upon the light of day, doomed to drag out an existence worse than death, and all for what? For taking life? No, no, no—life in that land is cheap, cheaper than it ever was in the Middle Ages—but for doing dishonor to a superstition of the faith of Islam.

I remembered the American, and shuddered at the sight of this summary justice. Next morning, as my tentmen and muleteers were making ready to set out for Fez, my soldier-guide brought me a letter which had come by the French steamer by way of Malaga. It was from home; a brief note from my wife, with no explanation of her prolonged silence, merely saying that all was as usual at

Wimpole Street, and not mentioning our boy at all. The omission troubled me, the brevity and baldness of the message filled me with vague concern, and I had half a mind to delay my inland journey. Would that I had done so! Would that I had! Oh, would that I had!

Terrible, my son, terrible! A blighted and desolated land. But even worse than its own people are the renegades it takes from mine. Ah, I knew one such long ago. An outcast, a pariah, a shedder of blood, an apostate. But go on, go on.

II

FATHER, what voice was it that rang in my ears and cried, "Stay, do not travel; all your past from the beginning until to-day, all your future from to-day until the end, hangs on your action now; go, and your past is a waste, your fame a mockery, your success a reproach; remain, and your future is peace and happiness and content!" What voice, father, what voice?

I shut my ears to it, and six days afterward I arrived at Fez. My journey had impressed two facts upon my mind with startling vividness; first, that the Moor would stick at nothing in his jealousy of the honor of his faith, and next, that I was myself a changed and coarsened man. I was reminded of the one when in El Kassar I saw an old Jew beaten in the open streets because he had not removed his slippers and walked barefoot as he passed the front of a mosque; and again in Wazzan, when I witnessed the welcome given to the Grand Shereef on his return from his home in Tangier to his house in the capital of his province. The Jew was the chief usurer of the town, and had half the Moorish inhabitants in his toils; yet his commercial power had counted for nothing against the honor of Islam. "I," said he to me that night in the Jewish inn, the Fondak, "I, who could clap every man of them in the Kasbah, and their masters with them, for moneys they owe me, I to be treated like a dog by these scurvy sons of Ishmael —God of Jacob!" The Grand Shereef was a drunkard, a gamester, and worse. There was no ordinance of Mohammed which he had not openly outraged, yet because he stood to the people as the descendant of the Prophet, and the father of the faith, they groveled on the ground before him and kissed his robes, his knees, his feet, his stirrups, and the big hoofs of the horse that carried him. As for myself, I realized that the atmosphere of the country had corrupted me, when I took out from my baggage a curved knife in its silver-mounted sheath, which I had bought of a hawker at Tangier, and fixed it prominently in the belt of my Norfolk jacket.

The morning after my arrvial in Fez I encountered my American companion of the voyage. Our meeting was a strange one.

I had rambled aimlessly with my guide through the new town into the old until I had lighted by chance upon the slave market in front of the ruins of the ancient Grand Mosque, and upon a human auction which was then proceeding. No scene so full of shame had I ever beheld, but the fascination of the spectacle held me, and I stood and watched and listened. The slave being sold was a black girl, and she was beautiful according to the standard of her skin, bareheaded, barefooted, and clad as lightly over her body as decency allowed, so as to reveal the utmost of her charms.

"Now, brothers," cried the salesman, "look, see" (pinching the girl's naked arms and rolling his jeweled fingers from her chin downward over her bare neck on to her bosom), "sound of wind and limb, and with rosy lips, fit for the kisses of a king—how much?"

"A hundred dollars," cried a voice out of the crowd. I thought I had heard the voice before, and looked up to see who had spoken. It was a tall man with haik over his turban, and blue selam on top of a yellow kaftan.

"A hundred dollars offered," cried the salesman, "only a hundred. Brothers, now's the chance for all true believers."

"A hundred and five," cried another voice.

"A hundred and ten."

"A hundred and fifteen."

"A hundred and fifteen for this jewel of a girl," cried the salesman. "It's giving her away, brothers. By the prophets, if you are not quick I'll keep her for myself. Come, look at her, Sidi. Isn't she good enough for a sultan? The Prophet (God rest him) would have leaped at her. He loved sweet women as much as he loved sweet odors. Now, for the third and last time—how much? Remember, I guarantee her seventeen years of age, sound, strong, plump, and sweet."

"A hundred and twenty," cried the voice I had heard first. I looked up at the speaker again. It was the American in his Moorish costume.

I could bear no more of the sickening spectacle, and as I turned aside with my interpreter, I was conscious that my companion of the voyage was following me. When we came to some dark arches that divided Old Fez from New Fez the American spoke, and I sent my interpreter ahead.

"You see I am giving myself full tether in this execrable land," he said.

"Indeed you are," I answered.

"Well, as the Romans in Rome, you know—it was what I came for," he said.

"Take care," I replied. "Take care."

He drew up shortly and said, "By the way, I ought to be ashamed to meet you."

I thought he ought, but for courtesy I asked him why.

"Because," he said, "I have failed to act up to my principles."

"In what?" I inquired.

"In saving the life of a scoundrel at the risk of my own," he answered.

Then he told me his story. "I left Tangier," he said, "with four men in my caravan, but it did not suit me to bring them into Fez, so I dismissed them a day's ride from here, paying in full for the whole journey and making a present over. My generosity was a blunder. The Moor can not comprehend an act of disinterested kindness, and I saw the ruffians lay their heads together to find out what it could mean. Three of them gave it up and went off home, but the fourth determined to follow the trace. His name was Larby."

Larby! El Arby, my son? Did you say El Arby? Of Tangier, too? A Moor? Or was he a Spanish renegade turned Muslim? But no matter—no matter.

"He was my guide," said the American, "and a most brazen hypocrite, always cheating me. I let him do so, it amused me—always lying to my face, and always fumbling his beads—'God forgive me! God forgive me'—an appropriate penance, you know the way of it. 'Peace, Sidi!' said the rascal: 'Farewell! Allah send we meet in Paradise.' But the devil meant that we should meet before that. We have met. It was a hot moment. Do you know the Hamadshá Mosque? It is a place in a side street sacred to the preaching of a fanatical follower of one Sidi Ali bin Hamdoosh, and to certain wild dances executed in a glass and fire eating frenzy. I thought I should like to hear a Moorish D. L. Moody, and one day I went there. As I was going in I met a man coming out. It was Larby. 'Beeba!' he whispered, with a tragic start—that was his own name for me on the journey. 'Keep your tongue between your teeth,' I whispered back. 'I was Beeba yesterday, to-day I'm Sidi Mohammed.' Then I entered, I spread my prayer-mat, chanted my first Sura, listened to a lusty sermon, and came out. There, as I expected, in the blind lane leading from the

Hamadshá to the town was Larby waiting for me. 'Beeba,' said he, with a grin, 'you play a double hand of cards.' 'Then,' said I, 'take care I don't trump your trick.' The rascal had thought I might bribe him, and when he knew that I would not I saw murder in his face. He had conceived the idea of betraying me at the next opportunity. At that moment he was as surely aiming at my life as if he had drawn his dagger and stabbed me. It was then that I disgraced my principles."

"How? how?" I said, though truly I had little need to ask.

"We were alone, I tell you, in a blind lane," said the American; "but I remembered stories the man had told me of his children. 'Little Hoolia,' he called his daughter, a pretty, black-eyed mite of six, who always watched for him when he was away."

I was breaking into perspiration. "Do you mean," I said, "that you should have—"

"I mean that I should have killed the scoundrel there and then!" said the American.

"God forbid it!" I cried, and my hair rose from my scalp in horror.

"Why not?" said the American. "It would have been an act of *self-defense*. The man meant to kill me. He will kill me still if I give him the chance. What is the difference between murder in a moment and murder after five, ten, fifteen, twenty days? Only that one is murder in hot blood and haste and the other is murder in cold blood and by stealth. Is it life that you think so precious? Then why should I value *his* life more than I value *my own?*"

I shivered, and could say nothing.

"You think me a monster," said the American, "but remember, since we left England the atmosphere has changed."

"Remember, too," I said, "that this man can do you no harm unless you intrude yourself upon his superstitions again. Leave the country immediately; depend upon it, he is following you."

"That's not possible," said the American, "for *I* am following *him*. Until I come up with him I can do nothing, and my existence is not worth a pin's purchase."

I shuddered, and we parted. My mind told me that he was right, but my heart clamored above the voice of reason and said, "*You* could not do it, no, not to save a hundred lives."

Ah, father, how little we know ourselves—how little, oh, how little! When I think that *he* shrank back—he who held life so cheap—while *I*—I who held it so dear, so sacred, so god-like—

Bear with me; I will tell all.

I met the American at intervals during the next six days. We did not often speak, but as we passed in the streets—he alone, I always with my loquacious interpreter—I observed with dread the change that the shadow of death hanging over a man's head can bring to pass in his face and manner. He grew thin and sallow and wild-eyed. One day he stopped me, and said: "I know now what your Buckshot Forster died of," and then he went on without another word.

But about ten days after our first meeting in the slave market he stopped me again, and said, quite cheerfully: "He has gone home —I'm satisfied of that now."

"Thank God!" I answered involuntarily.

"Ah," he said, with a twinkle of the eye, "who says that a man must hang up his humanity on the peg with his hat in the hospital hall when he goes to be a surgeon? If the poet Keats had got over the first shock to his sensibilities, he might have been the greatest surgeon of his day."

"You'll be more careful in future," I said, "not to cross the fanaticism of these fanatics?"

He smiled, and asked if I knew the Karueein Mosque. I told him I had seen it.

"It is the greatest in Morocco," he said. "The Moors say the inner court stands on eight hundred pillars. I don't believe them, and I mean to see for myself."

I found it useless to protest, and he went his way, laughing at my blanched and bewildered face. "That man," I thought, "is fit to be the hero of a tragedy, and he is wasting himself on a farce."

Meanwhile, I had a shadow over my own life which would not lift. That letter which I had received from home at the moment of leaving Tangier had haunted me throughout the journey. Its brevity, its insufficiency, its delay, and above all its conspicuous omission of all mention of our boy had given rise to endless speculation. Every dark possibility that fancy could devise had risen before me by way of explanation. I despised myself for such weakness, but self-contempt did nothing to allay my vague fears. The child was ill; I knew it; I felt it; I could swear to it as certainly as if my ears could hear the labored breathing in his throat.

Nevertheless I went on; so much did my philosophy do for me. But when I got to Fez I walked straightway to the English post-office to see if there was a letter awaiting me. Of course there was

no letter there. I had not reflected that I had come direct from the port through which the mails had to pass, and that if the postal courier had gone by me on the road I must have seen him, which I had not.

I was ashamed before my own consciousness, but all the same the post-office saw me every day. Whatever the direction that I took with my interpreter, it led toward that destination in the end. And whatever the subject of his ceaseless gabble—a very deluge of words—it was forced to come round at last to the times and seasons of the mails from England. These were bi-weekly, with various possibilities of casual arrivals besides.

Fez is a noble city, the largest and finest Oriental city I had yet seen, fit to compare in its own much different way of beauty and of splendor with the great cities of the West, the great cities of the earth, and of all time; but for me its attractions were overshadowed by the gloom of my anxiety. The atmosphere of an older world, the spirit of the East, the sense of being transported to Bible times, the startling interpretations which the Biblical stories were receiving by the events of every day—these brought me no pleasure. As for the constant reminders of the presence of Islam every hour, at every corner, the perpetual breath of prayer and praise, which filled this land that was corrupt to the core, they gave me pain more poignant than disgust. The call of the mueddin in the early morning was a daily agony. I slept three streets from the Karueein minarets, but the voice seemed to float into my room in the darkness, and coil round my head and ring in my ears. Always I was awakened at the first sound of the stentorian "Allah-u-Kabar," or, if I awoke in the silence and thought with a feeling of relief, "It is over, I have slept through it," the howling wail would suddenly break in upon my thanksgiving.

There was just one fact of life in Fez that gave me a kind of melancholy joy. At nearly every turn of a street my ears were arrested by the multitudinous cackle, the broken, various-voiced sing-song of a children's school. These Moorish schools interested me. They were the simplest of all possible institutes, consisting usually of a rush-covered cellar, two steps down from the street, with the teacher, the Táleb, often a half-blind old man, squatting in the middle of the floor, and his pupils seated about him, and all reciting together some passages of the Koran, the only text-book of education. One such school was close under my bedroom window; I heard the drone of it as early as seven o'clock every morning, and as often as I went abroad I stood for a moment and looked in at the open doorway. A black boy sat there with a

basket for the alms of passers-by. He was a bright-eyed little fellow, six or seven years of age, and he knew one English phrase only: "Come on," he would say, and hold up the basket and smile. What pathetic interest his sunny face had for me, how he would cheer and touch me, with what strange memories his voice and laugh would startle me, it would be pitiful to tell.

Bear with me! I was far from my own darling, I was in a strange land, I was a weak man for all that I was thought so strong, and my one besetting infirmity—more consuming than a mother's love—was preyed upon by my failing health, which in turn was preying upon it.

And if the sights of the streets brought me pain, or pleasure that was akin to pain, what of the sights, the visions, the dreams of my own solitary mind! I could not close my eyes in the darkness but I saw my boy. His little child-ghost was always with me. He never appeared as I had oftenest seen him—laughing, romping, and kicking up his legs on the hearth-rug. Sometimes he came as he would do at home after he committed some childish trespass and I had whipped him—opening the door of my room and stepping one pace in, quietly, nervously, half fearfully, to say good-night and kiss me at his bedtime, and I would lift my eyes and see, over the shade of my library lamp, his little sober red-and-white face just dried of its recent tears. Or, again, sometimes I myself would seem in these dumb dramas of the darkness to go into his room when he was asleep, that I might indulge my hungry foolish heart with looks of fondness that the reproving parent could not give, and find him sleeping with an open book in his hands, which he had made believe to read. And then for sheer folly of love I would pick up his wee knickerbockers and turn out its load at either side, to see what a boy's pockets might be like, and discover a curiosity shop of poor little treasures—a knife with a broken blade, a nail, two marbles, a bit of brass, some string, a screw, a crust of bread, a cork, and a leg of a lobster.

While I was indulging this weakness the conviction was deepening in my mind that my boy was ill. So strong did this assurance become at length, that, though I was ashamed to give way to it so far as to set my face toward home, being yet no better for my holiday, I sat down at length to write a letter to Wenman—I had written to my wife by every mail—that I might relieve my pent-up feelings. I said nothing to him of my misgivings, for I was loth to confess to them, having no positive reasons whatever, and no negative grounds except the fact that I was receiving no letters. But I gave him a full history of my boy's case, described

each stage of it in the past, foretold its probable developments in the future, indicated with elaborate care the treatment necessary at every point, and foreshadowed the contingencies under which it might in the end become malignant and even deadly unless stopped by the operation that I had myself, after years of labor, found the art of making.

I spent an afternoon in the writing of this letter, and when it was done I felt as if a burden that had been on my back for ages had suddenly been lifted away. Then I went out alone to post it. The time was close to evening prayers, and as I walked through the streets the Tálebs and tradesmen, with their prayer-mats under their arms, were trooping into the various mosques. Going by the Karueein Mosque I observed that the Good Muslimeen were entering it by hundreds. "Some special celebration," I thought. My heart was light, my eyes were alert, and my step was quick. For the first time since my coming to the city, Fez seemed to me a beautiful place. The witchery of the scenes of the streets took hold of me. To be thus transported into a world of two thousand years ago gave me the delight of magic.

When I reached the English post-office I found it shut up. On its shutters behind its iron grating a notice-board was hung out, saying that the office was temporarily closed for the sorting of an incoming mail and the despatch of an outgoing one. There was a little crowd of people waiting in front—chiefly Moorish servants of English visitors—for the window to open again, and near by stood the horses of the postal couriers pawing the pavement. I dropped my letter into the slit in the window, and then stood aside to see if the mail had brought anything for me at last.

The window was thrown up, and two letters were handed to me through the grating over the heads of the Moors, who were crushing underneath. I took them with a sort of fear, and half wished at the first moment that they might be from strangers. They were from home; one was from my wife—I knew the envelope before looking at the handwriting—the other was from Wenman.

I read Wenman's letter first. Good or bad, the news must be broken to me gently. Hardly had I torn the sheet open when I saw what it contained. My little Noel had been ill; he was still so, but not seriously, and I was not to be alarmed. The silence on their part which I had complained of so bitterly had merely been due to their fear of giving me unnecessary anxiety. For his part (Wenman's) he would have written before, relying on my manliness and good sense, but my wife had restrained him, saying

she knew me better. There was no cause for apprehension; the boy was going along as well as could be expected, etc., etc., etc., etc., etc.

Not a word to indicate the nature and degree of the attack. Such an insufficient epistle must have disquieted the veriest nincompoop alive. To send a thing like that to *me*—to me of all men! Was there ever so gross a mistake of judgment?

I knew in an instant what the fact must be—my boy was down with that old congenital infirmity of the throat. Surely my wife had told me more. She had. Not by design, but unwittingly she had revealed the truth to me. Granville Wenman had written to me, she said, explaining everything, and I was not to worry and bother. All that was possible was being done for our darling, and if I were there I could do no more. The illness had to have its course, so I must be patient. All this is the usual jargon of the surgery—I knew that Wenman had dictated it—and then a true line or two worth all the rest from my dear girl's own bleeding mother's heart. Our poor Noel was this, and that, he complained of so-and-so, and first began to look unwell in such and such ways.

It was clear as noonday. The attack of the throat which I had foreseen had come. Five years I had looked for it. Through five long years I had waited and watched to check it. I had labored day and night that when it should come I might meet it. My own health I had wasted—and for what? For fame, for wealth, for humanity, for science? No, no, no, but for the life of my boy. And now when his enemy was upon him at length, where was I—I who alone in all this world of God could save him? I was thirteen hundred miles from home.

Oh, the irony of my fate! My soul rose in rebellion against it. Staggering back through the darkening streets, the whole city seemed dead and damned.

How far I walked in this state of oblivion I do not know, but presently out of the vague atmosphere wherein all things had been effaced I became conscious, like one awakening after a drug, of an unusual commotion going on around. People were running past me and across me in the direction of the Karueein Mosque. From that place a loud tumult was rising into the air. The noise was increasing with every moment, and rising to a Babel of human voices.

I did not very much heed the commotion. What were the paltry excitements of life to me now? I was repeating to myself the last words of my poor wife's letter: "How I miss you, and

wish you were with me!" "I will go back," I was telling myself, "I will go back."

In the confusion of my mind I heard snatches of words spoken by the people as they ran by me. "Nazarene!" "Christian!" "Cursed Jew!" These were hissed out at each other by the Moors as they were scurrying past. At length I heard a Spaniard shout up to a fellow-countryman who was on a house-top: "Englishman caught in the mosque."

At that my disordered senses recovered themselves, and suddenly I became aware that the tumult was coming in my direction. The noise grew deeper, louder, and more shrill at every step. In another moment it had burst upon me in a whirlpool of uproar.

Round the corner of the narrow lane that led to the Karueein Mosque a crowd of people came roaring like a torrent. They were Moors, Arabs, and Berbers, and they were shouting, shrieking, yelling, and uttering every sound that the human voice can make. At the first instant I realized no more than this, but at the next I saw that the people were hunting a man as hounds hunt a wolf. The man was flying before them; he was coming toward me: in the gathering darkness I could see him; his dress, which was Moorish, was torn into shreds about his body; his head was bare; his chest was bleeding; I saw his face—it was the face of the American, my companion of the voyage.

He saw me too, and at that instant he turned about and faced full upon his pursuers. What happened then I dare not tell.

Father, he was a brave man, and he sold his life dearly. But he fell at last. He was but one to a hundred. The yelping human dogs trod him down like vermin.

I am a coward. I fled and left him. When I got back to my lodgings I called for my guide, for I was resolved to leave Fez without an hour's delay. The guide was not to be found, and I had to go in search of him. When I lighted on him, at length, he was in a dingy coffee-house, squatting on the ground by the side of another Moor, an evil-looking scoundrel, who was reciting some brave adventure to a group of admiring listeners.

I called my man out and told him of my purpose. He lifted his hands in consternation. "Leave Fez to-night?" he said. "Impossible, my sultan, impossible! My lord has not heard the order!"

"What order?" I asked. I was alarmed. Must I be a prisoner in Morocco while my child lay dying in England?

"That the gates be closed and no Christian allowed to leave the city until the morning. It is the order of the Kaleefa, my sultan, since the outrage of the Christian in the mosque this morning."

I suspected the meaning of this move in an instant, and the guide's answer to my questions ratified my fears. One man, out of madness or thirst for revenge, had led the attack upon the American, and a crowd of fanatics had killed him—giving him no chance of retreat with his life, either by circumcision or the profession of Islam. But cooler heads had already found time to think of the penalty of shedding Christian blood. That penalty was twofold: first, the penalty of disgrace which would come of the idea that the lives of Christians were not safe in Morocco, and next, the penalty of hard dollars to be paid to the American Minister at Tangier.

To escape from the double danger the outrage was to be hushed up. Circumstances lent themselves to this artifice. True, that passage of the American across country had been known in every village through which he had passed; but at the gates of Fez he had himself cut off all trace of his identity. He had entered the city alone, or in disguise. His arrival as a stranger had not been notified at any of the "clubs" or bazaars. Only one man had recognized him: that man was Larby, his guide.

The body was to be buried secretly, no Christian being allowed to see it. Then the report was to be given out that the dead man had been a Moorish subject, that he had been killed in a blood-fued, and that the rumor that he was a Christian caught in the act of defying the mosque was an error, without the shadow of truth in it. But until all this had been done no Christian should be allowed to pass through the gates. As things stood at present the first impulse of a European would be to fly to the Consul with the dangerous news.

I knew something of the Moors and their country by this time, and I left Fez that night, but it cost me fifty pounds to get out of it. There was a bribe for the kaid, a bribe for the Kaleefa, and bribes for every ragged Jack of the underlings down to the porter at the gate.

With all my horror and the fever of my anxiety, I could have laughed in the face of the first of these functionaries. Between his greedy desire of the present I was offering him, his suspicion that I knew something of the identity of the Christian who had been killed, his misgivings as to the reasons of my sudden flight,

and his dread that I would discover the circumstances of the American's death, the figure he cut was a foolish one. But why should I reproach the man's duplicity? I was practising the like of it myself. Too well I knew that if I betrayed any knowledge of what had happened it would be impossible that I should be allowed to leave Fez.

So I pretended to know nothing. It was a ridiculous interview.

On my way back from it I crossed a little company of Moors, leading, surrounding, and following a donkey. The donkey was heavily laden with what appeared to be two great panniers of rubbish. It was dusk, but my sight has always been keen, and I could not help seeing that hidden under the rubbish there was another burden on the donkey's back. It was the body of a dead man. I had little doubt of who the dead man must be; but I hastened on and did not look again. The Moors turned into a garden as I passed them. I guessed what they were about to do there, but my own danger threatened me, and I wished to see and know no more.

As I was passing out of the town in the moonlight an hour before midnight, with my grumbling tentmen and muleteers at my heels, a man stepped out of the shadow of the gateway arch and leered in my face, and said in broken English, "So your Christian friend is corrected by Allah!"

Moorish English, my son, or Spanish?

Spanish.

It was the scoundrel whom I had seen in the coffee-house. I knew he must be Larby, and that he had betrayed his master at last. Also, I knew that he was aware that I had seen all. At that moment, looking down from my horse's back into the man's evil face my whole nature changed. I remembered the one opportunity which the American had lost out of a wandering impulse of human tenderness—of saving his own life by taking the life of him that threatened it, and I said in my heart of hearts, "Now God in heaven keep me from the like temptation."

Ah! father, do not shrink from me; think of it, only think of it! I was fifteen hundred miles from home, and I was going back to my dying boy.

God keep you, indeed, my son. Your feet were set in a slippery place. El Arby, you say? A man of your own age? Dark? Sallow? It must be the same. Long ago I knew the man you speak of. It was under another name, and in another country.

Yes, he was all you say. God forgive him, God forgive him! Poor wrecked and bankrupt soul. His evil angel was always at his hand, and his good one far away. He brought his father to shame, and his mother to the grave. There was a crime and conviction, then banishment, and after that his father fled from the world. But the Church is peace; he took refuge with her, and all is well. Go on now.

III

FATHER, I counted it up. Every mile of the distance I counted it. And I reckoned every hour since my wife's letter had been written against the progress and period of my boy's disease. So many days since the date of the letter, and Noel had been ailing and ill so many days before that. The gross sum of those days was so much, and in that time the affection, if it ran the course I looked for, must have reached such and such a stage. While I toiled along over the broad wastes of that desolate land, I seemed to know at any moment what the condition must be at the utmost and best of my boy in his bed at home.

Then I reckoned the future as well as the past. So many days it would take me to ride to Tangier, so many hours to cross from Tangier to Cadiz, so many days and nights by rail from Cadiz to London. The grand total of time past since my poor Noel first became unwell, and of time to come before I could reach his side, would be so much. What would his condition be then? I knew that also. It would be so and so.

Thus, step by step I counted it all up. The interval would be long, very long, between the beginning of the attack and my getting home, but not too long for my hopes. All going well with me, I should still arrive in time. If the disease had taken an evil turn, my boy might perhaps be in its last stages. But then *I* would be there, and I could save him. The operation which I had spent five years of my life to master would bring him back from the gates of death itself.

Father, I had no doubt of that, and I had no doubt of my calculations. Lying here now it seems as if the fiends themselves must have shrieked to see me in that far-off land gambling like a fool in the certainty of the life I loved, and reckoning nothing of the hundred poor chances that might snuff it out like a candle. Call it frenzy, call it madness, nevertheless it kept my heart alive, and saved me from despair.

But, oh! the agony of my impatience! If anything should stop me now! Let me be one day later—only one—and what might not occur! Then, how many were the dangers of delay! First, there

was the possibility of illness overtaking me. My health was not better, but worse, than when I left home. I was riding from sunrise to sunset, and not sleeping at nights. No matter! I put all fear from that cause away from me. Though my limbs refused to bear me up, and under the affliction of my nerves my muscles lost the power to hold the reins, yet if I could be slung on to the back of my horse I should still go on.

But then there was the worse danger of coming into collision with the fanaticism of the people through whose country I had to pass. I did not fear the fate of the American, for I could not be guilty of his folly. But I remembered the admission of the English Consul at Tangier that a stranger might offend the superstitions of the Moslems unwittingly; I recalled his parting words of counsel, spoken half in jest, "Keep out of a Moorish prison"; and the noisome dungeon into which the young Berber had been cast arose before my mind in visions of horror.

What precautions I took to avoid these dangers of delay would be a long and foolish story. Also, it would be a mean and abject one, and I should be ashamed to tell it. How I saluted every scurvy beggar on the way with the salutation of his faith and country; how I dismounted as I approached a town or a village, and only returned to the saddle when I had gone through it: how I uncovered my head—in ignorance of Eastern custom—as I went by a saint's house, and how at length (remembering the Jewish banker who was beaten) I took off my shoes and walked barefoot as I passed in front of a mosque.

Yes, it was I who paid all this needless homage; I whose pride has always been my bane; I who could not bend the knee to be made a knight; I who had felt humility before no man. Even so it was. In my eagerness, my impatience, my dread of impediment on my journey home to my darling who waited for me there, I was studying the faces and groveling at the feet of that race of ignorant fanatics.

But the worst of my impediments were within my own camp. The American was right. The Moor can not comprehend a disinterested action. My foolish homage to their faith awakened the suspicions of my men. When they had tried in vain to fathom the meaning of it, they agreed to despise me. I did not heed their contempt, but I was compelled to take note of its consequences. From being my servants, they became my masters. When it pleased them to encamp I had to rest, though my inclination was to go on, and only when it suited them to set out again could I resume my journey. In vain did I protest, and plead, and threaten.

The Moor is often a brave man, but these men were a gang of white-livered poltroons, and a blow would have served to subdue them. With visions of a Moorish prison before my eyes I dared not raise my hand. One weapon alone could I, in my own cowardice, employ against them—bribes, bribes, bribes. Such was the sole instrument with which I combated their laziness, their duplicity, and their deceit.

Father, I was a pitiful sight in my weakness and my impatience. We had not gone far out of Fez when I observed that the man Larby was at the heels of our company. This alarmed me, and I called to my guide.

"Alee," I said, "who is that evil-looking fellow?"

Alee threw up both hands in amazement. "Evil-looking fellow!" he cried. "God be gracious to my father! Who does my lord mean? Not Larby; no, not Larby. Larby is a good man. He lives in one of the mosque houses at Tangier. The Nadir leased it to him, and he keeps his shop on the Sôk de Barra. Allah bless Larby. Should you want musk, should you want cinnamon, Larby is the man to sell to you. But sometimes he guides Christians to Fez, and then his brother keeps his shop for him."

"But why is the man following us?" I asked.

"My sultan," said Alee, "am I not telling you? Larby is returning home. The Christian he took to Fez, where is he?"

"Yes," I said, "where is he?"

Alee grinned, and answered: "He is gone—southward, my lord."

"Why should you lie to me like that?" I said. "You know the Christian is dead, and that this Larby was the means of killing him!"

"Shoo! What is my lord saying?" cried Alee, lifting his fat hands with a warning gesture. "What did my lord tell the Basha? My lord must know nothing—nothing. It would not be safe."

Then with glances of fear toward Larby, and dropping his voice to a whisper, Alee added, "It is true the Christian is dead; he died last sunset. Allah corrected him. So Larby is going back alone, going back to his shop, to his house, to his wives, to his little daughter Hoolia. Allah send Larby a safe return. Not following us, Sidi. No, no; Larby is going back the same way—that is all."

The answer did not content me, but I could say no more. Nevertheless, my uneasiness at the man's presence increased hour by hour. I could not think of him without thinking also of the

American and of the scene of horror near to the Karueein Mosque. I could not look at him but the blood down my back ran cold. So I called my guide again, and said, "Send that man away; I will not have him in our company."

Alee pretended to be deeply wounded. "Sidi," he said, "ask anything else of me. What will you ask? Will you ask me to die for you? I am ready, I am willing, I am satisfied. But Larby is my friend. Larby is my brother, and this thing you ask of me I can not do. Allah has not written it. Sidi, it can not be."

With such protestations—the common cant of the country—I had need to be content. But now the impression fixed itself upon my mind that the evil-faced scoundrel who had betrayed the American to his death was not only following *us* but *me*. Oh! the torment of that idea in the impatience of my spirit and the racking fever of my nerves! To be dogged day and night as by a bloodhound, never to raise my eyes without the dread of encountering the man's watchful eye—the agony of the incubus was unbearable!

My first thought was merely that the rascal meant robbery. However far I might ride ahead of my own people in the daytime he was always close behind me, and as surely as I wandered away from the camp at nightfall I was overtaken by him or else I met him face to face.

"Alee," I said at last, "that man is a thief."

Of course Alee was horrified. "Ya Allah!" he cried. "What is my lord saying? The Moor is no thief. The Moor is true, the Moor is honest. None so true and honest as the Moor. Wherefore should the Moor be a thief? To be a thief in Barbary is to be a fool. Say I rob a Christian. Good. I kill him and take all he has and bury him in a lonely place. All right. What happens? Behold, Sidi, this is what happens. Your Christian Consul says, 'Where is the Christian you took to Fez?' I can not tell. I lie, I deceive, I make excuses. No use. Your Christian Consul goes to the Kasbah, and says to the Basha: 'Cast that Moor into prison, he is a robber and a murderer!' Then he goes to the Sultan at Marrakesh, in the name of your Queen, who lives in the country of the Nazarenes, over the sea. 'Pay me twenty thousand dollars,' he says, 'for the life of my Christian who is robbed and murdered.' Just so. The Sultan—Allah preserve our Mulai Hassan!—he pays the dollars. Good, all right, just so. But is that all, Sidi? No, Sidi, that is not all. The Sultan—God prolong the life of our merciful lord—he then comes to my people, to my Basha, to

my bashalic, and he says, 'Pay me back my forty thousand dollars'—do you hear me, Sidi, *forty* thousand!—'for the Nazarene who is dead.' All right. But we can not pay. Good. The Sultan—Allah save him!—he comes, he takes all we have, he puts every man of my people to the sword. We are gone, we are wiped out. Did I not say, Sidi, to be a thief in Barbary is to be a fool?"

It was cold comfort. That the man Larby was following me I was confident, and that he meant to rob me I was at first convinced. Small solace, therefore, in the thought that if the worst befell me, and my boy at home died for want of his father, who lay robbed and murdered in those desolate wastes, my Government would exact a claim in paltry dollars.

My next thought was that the man was merely watching me out of the country. That he was aware that I knew his secret was only too certain; that he had betrayed my knowledge to the authorities at the capital after I had parted from them was more than probable, and it was not impossible that the very men who had taken bribes of me had in their turn bribed him that he might follow me and see that I did not inform the Ministers and Consuls of foreign countries of the murder of the American in the streets of Fez.

That theory partly reconciled me to the man's presence: Let him watch. His constant company was in its tormenting way my best security. I should go to no Minister, and no Consul should see me. I had too much reason to think of my own living affairs to busy myself with those of the dead American.

But such poor unction as this reflection brought me was dissipated by a second thought. What security for the man himself, or for the authorities who might have bribed him—or perhaps menaced him—to watch me would lie in the fact that I had passed out of the country without revealing the facts of the crime which I had witnessed? Safely back in England, I might tell all with safety. Once let me leave Morocco with their secret in my breast, and both the penalties these people dreaded might be upon them. Merely to watch me was wasted labor. They meant to do more, or they would have done nothing.

Thinking so, another idea took possession of me with a shock of terror—the man was following me to kill me as the sole Christian witness of the crime that had been committed. By the light of that theory everything became plain. When I visited the Kasbah nothing was known of my acquaintance with the murdered man. My bribes were taken, and I was allowed to leave Fez in spite of public orders. But then came Larby with alarming intelligence. I had been a friend of the American, and had been seen

to speak with him in the public streets. Perhaps Larby himself had seen me, or perhaps my own guide, Alee, had betrayed me to his friend and "brother." At that the Kaid or his Kaleefa had raised their eyebrows and sworn at each other for simpletons and fools. To think that the very man who had intended to betray them had come with an innocent face and a tale of a sick child in England! To think that they had suffered him to slip through their fingers and leave them some paltry bribes of fifty pounds! Fifty pounds taken by stealth against twenty thousand dollars to be plumped down after the Christian had told his story! These Nazarenes were so subtle, and the sons of Ishmael were so simple. But diamond cut diamond. Everything was not lost. One hundred and twenty-five miles this Christian had still to travel before he could sail from Barbary, and not another Christian could he encounter on that journey. Then up, Larby, and after him! God make your way easy! Remember, Larby, remember, good fellow, it is not only the pockets of the people of Fez that are in danger if that Christian should escape. Let him leave the Gharb alive, and your own neck is in peril. You were the spy, you were the informer, you were the hotheaded madman who led the attack that ended in the spilling of Christian blood. If the Sultan should have to pay twenty thousand dollars to the Minister for America at Tangier for the life of this dead dog whom we have grubbed into the earth in a garden, if the Basha of Fez should have to pay forty thousand dollars to the Sultan, if the people should have to pay eighty thousand dollars to the Basha, then you, Larby, you in your turn will have to pay with your *life* to the people. It is *your* life against the life of the Christian. So follow him, watch him, silence him, he knows your secret—away!

Such was my notion of what happened at the Kasbah of Fez after I had passed the gates of the city. It was a wild vision, but to my distempered imagination it seemed to be a plausible theory. And now Larby, the spy upon the American, Larby, my assassin-elect, Larby, who to save his own life must take mine, Larby was with me, was beside me, was behind me constantly!

God help you, my son, God help you! Larby! O Larby! Again, again!

What was I to do? Open my heart to Larby; to tell him it was a blunder; that I meant no man mischief; that I was merely hastening back to my sick boy, who was dying for want of me? That was impossible; Larby would laugh in my face, and still follow me. Bribe him? That was useless; Larby would take my money and make the surer of his victim. It was a difficult problem; but

at length I hit on a solution. Father, you will pity me for a fool when you hear it. I would bargain with Larby as Faust bargained with the devil. He should give me two weeks of life, and come with me to England. I should do my work here, and Larby should never leave my side. My boy's life should be saved by that operation, which I alone knew how to perform. After that Larby and I should square accounts together. He should have all the money I had in the world, and the passport of my name and influence for his return to his own country. I should write a confession of suicide, and then—and then—only then—at home—here in my own room—Larby should kill me in order to satisfy himself that his own secret and the secret of his people must be safe forever.

It was a mad dream, but what dream of dear life is not mad that comes to the man whom death dogs like a bloodhound? And mad as it was I tried to make it come true. The man was constantly near me, and on the third morning of our journey I drew up sharply, and said:

"Larby!"

"Sidi," he answered.

"Would you not like to go on with me to England?"

He looked at me with his glittering eyes, and I gave an involuntary shiver. I had awakened the man's suspicions in an instant. He thought I meant to entrap him. But he only smiled knowingly, shrugged his shoulders, and answered civilly: "I have my shop in the Sôk de Barra, Sidi. And then there are my wives and my sons and my little Hoolia—God be praised for all his blessings."

"Hoolia?" I asked.

"My little daughter, Sidi."

"How old is she?"

"Six, Sidi, only six, but as fair as an angel."

"I dare say she misses you when you are away, Larby," I said.

"You have truth, Sidi. She sits in the Sôk by the tents of the brassworkers and plaits rushes all the day long, and looks over to where the camels come by the saints' houses on the hill, and waits and watches."

"Larby," I said, "I, too, have a child at home who is waiting and watching. A boy, my little Noel, six years of age, just as old as your own little Hoolia. And so bright, so winsome. But he is ill, he is dying, and he is all the world to me. Larby, I am a surgeon, I am a doctor, if I could but reach England—"

It was worse than useless. I stopped, for I could go no farther.

The cold glitter of the man's eyes passed over me like frost over flame, and I knew his thought as well as if he had spoken it. "I have heard that story before," he was telling himself, "I have heard it at the Kasbah, and it is a lie and a trick."

My plan was folly, and I abandoned it; but I was more than ever convinced of my theory. This man was following me to kill me. He was waiting an opportunity to do his work safely, secretly, and effectually. His rulers would shield him in his crime, for by that crime they would themselves be shielded.

Father, my theory, like my plan, was foolishness. Only a madman would have dreamt of concealing a crime whereof there was but one witness, by a second crime, whereof the witnesses must have been five hundred. The American had traveled in disguise and cut off the trace of his identity to all men save myself. When he died at the hands of the fanatics whose faith he had outraged, I alone of all Christians knew that it was Christian blood that had stained the streets of Fez. But how different my own death must have been. I had traveled openly as a Christian and an Englishman. At the consulate of Tangier I was known by name and repute, and at that of Fez I had registered myself. My presence had been notified at every town I had passed through, and the men of my caravan would not have dared to return to their homes without me. In the case of the murder of the American the chances to the Moorish authorities of claim for indemnity were as one to five hundred. In the case of the like catastrophe to myself they must have been as five hundred to one. Thus, in spite of fanaticism and the ineradicable hatred of the Moslem for the Nazarene, Morocco to me, as to all Christian travelers, traveling openly and behaving themselves properly, was as safe a place as England itself.

But how can a man be hot and cold and wise and foolish in a moment? I was in no humor to put the matter to myself temperately, and, though I had been so cool as to persuade myself that the authorities whom I had bribed could not have been madmen enough to think that they could conceal the murder of the American by murdering me, yet I must have remained convinced that Larby himself was such a madman.

As a surgeon, I had some knowledge of madness, and the cold, clear, steely glitter of the man's eyes when he looked at me was a thing that I could not mistake. I had seen it before in religious monomaniacs. It was an infallible and fatal sign. With that light in the eyes, like the glance of a dagger, men will kill the wives they love, and women will slaughter the children of their bosom. When

I saw it in Larby I shivered with a chilly presentiment. It seemed to say that I should see my home no more. I have seen my home once more; I am back in England, I am here, but—

No, no, not THAT! *Larby! Don't tell* ME *you did* THAT.

Father, is my crime so dark? That hour comes back and back. How long will it haunt me? How long? For ever and ever. When time for me is swallowed up in eternity, eternity will be swallowed up in the memory of that hour. Peace! Do you say peace? Ah! yes, yes; God is merciful!

Before I had spoken to Larby his presence in our company had been only as a dark and fateful shadow. Now it was a foul and hateful incubus. Never in all my life until then had I felt hatred for any human creature. But I hated that man with all the sinews of my soul. What was it to me that he was a madman? He intended to keep me from my dying boy. Why should I feel tenderness toward him because he was the father of his little Hoolia? By killing me he would kill my little Noel.

I began to recall the doctrines of the American as he propounded them on the ship. It was the life of an honest man against the life of a scoundrel. These things should be rated *ad valorem.* If the worst came to the worst, why should I have more respect for this madman's life than for my own?

I looked at the man and measured his strength against mine. He was a brawny fellow with broad shoulders, and I was no better than a weakling. I was afraid of him, but I was yet more afraid of myself. Sometimes I surprised my half-conscious mind in the act of taking out of its silver-mounted sheath the large curved knife which I had bought of the hawker at Tangier, and now wore in the belt of my Norfolk jacket. In my cowardice and my weakness this terrified me. Not all my borrowed philosophy served to support me against the fear of my own impulses. Meantime, I was in an agony of suspense and dread. The nights brought me no rest and the mornings no freshness.

On the fourth day out of Fez we arrived at Wazzan, and there, though the hour was still early, my men decided to encamp for the night. I protested, and they retorted; I threatened, and they excused themselves. The mules wanted shoeing. I offered to pay double that they might be shod immediately. The tents were torn by a heavy wind the previous night. I offered to buy new ones. When their trumpery excuses failed them, the men rebelled openly, and declared their determination not to stir out of Wazzan that night.

But they had reckoned without their host this time. I found

that there was an English Consul at Wazzan, and I went in search of him. His name was Smith, and he was a typical Englishman—ample, expansive, firm, resolute, domineering, and not troubled with too much sentiment. I told him of the revolt of my people and of the tyranny of the subterfuges whereby they had repeatedly extorted bribes. The good fellow came to my relief. He was a man of purpose, and he had no dying child twelve hundred miles away to make him a fool and a coward.

"Men," he said, "you've got to start away with this gentleman at sundown, and ride night and day—do you hear me, night and day—until you come to Tangier. A servant of my own shall go with you, and if you stop or delay or halt or go slowly he shall see that every man of you is clapped into the Kasbah as a blackmailer and a thief."

There was no more talk of rebellion. The men protested that they had always been willing to travel. Sidi had been good to them, and they would be good to Sidi. At sundown they would be ready.

"You will have no more trouble, sir," said the Consul; "but I will come back to see you start."

I thanked him and we parted. It was still an hour before sunset, and I turned aside to look at the town. I had barely walked a dozen paces when I came face to face with Larby. In the turmoil of my conflict with the men I had actually forgotten him for one long hour. He looked at me with his glittering eyes, and then his cold, clear gaze followed the Consul as he passed down the street. That double glance was like a shadowy warning. It gave me a shock of terror.

How had I forgotten my resolve to baffle suspicion by exchanging no word or look with any European Minister or Consul as long as I remained in Morocco? The expression in the man's face was not to be mistaken. It seemed to say, "So you have told all; very well, Sidi, we shall see."

With a sense as of creeping and cringing I passed on. The shadow of death seemed to have fallen upon me at last. I felt myself to be a doomed man. That madman would surely kill me. He would watch his chance; I should never escape him; my home would see me no more; my boy would die for want of me.

A tingling noise, as of the jangling of bells, was in my ears. Perhaps it was the tinkling of the bells of the water-carriers, prolonged and unbroken. A gauzy mist danced before my eyes. Perhaps it was the palpitating haze which the sun cast back from the gilded domes and minarets.

Domes and minarets were everywhere in this town of Wazzan. It seemed to be a place of mosques and saints' houses. Where the wide arch and the trough of the mosque were not, there was the open door in the low white-washed wall of the saint's house, surmounted by its white flag. In my dazed condition, I was sometimes in danger of stumbling into such places unawares. At the instant of recovered consciousness I always remembered the warnings of my guide as I stood by the house of Sidi Gali at Tangier: "Sacred place? Yes, sacred. No Nazarene may enter it. But Moslems, yes, Moslems may fly here for sanctuary. Life to the Moslem, death to the Nazarene. So it is."

Oh, it is an awful thing to feel that death is waiting for you constantly, that at any moment, at any turn, at any corner it may be upon you! Such was my state as I walked on that evening, waiting for the sunset, through the streets of Wazzan. At one moment I was conscious of a sound in my ears above the din of traffic—the *Arrah* of the ass-drivers, the *Bálak* of the men riding mules, and the general clamor of tongues. It was the steady beat of a footstep close behind me. I knew whose footstep it was. I turned about quickly, and Larby was again face to face with me. He met my gaze with the same cold, glittering look. My impulse was to fly at his throat, but that I dare not do. I knew myself to be a coward, and I remembered the Moorish prison.

"Larby," I said, "what do you want?"

"Nothing, Sidi, nothing," he answered.

"Then why are you following me like this?"

"Following you, Sidi?" The fellow raised his eyebrows and lifted both hands in astonishment.

"Yes, following me, dogging me, watching me, tracking me down. What does it mean? Speak out plainly."

"Sidi is jesting," he said, with a mischievous smile. "Is not this Wazzan—the holy city of Wazzan? Sidi is looking at the streets, at the mosques, at the saints' houses. So is Larby. That is all."

One glance at the man's evil eyes would have told you that he lied.

"Which way are you going?" I asked.

"This way." With a motion of the head he indicated the street before him.

"Then I am going to this," I said, and I walked away in the opposite direction.

I resolved to return to the English Consul, to tell him every-

thing, and claim his protection. Though all the Moorish authorities in Morocco were in league with this religious monomaniac, yet surely there was life and safety under English power for one whose only offense was that of being witness to a crime which might lead to a claim for indemnity.

That it should come to this, and I of all men should hear it! God help me! God lead me! God give me light! Light, light, O God; give me light!

IV

FULL of this new purpose and of the vague hope inspired by it, I was making my way back to the house of the Consul, when I came upon two postal couriers newly arrived from Tangier on their way to Fez. They were drawn up, amid a throng of the townspeople, before the palace of the Grand Shereef, and with the Moorish passion for "powder-play" they were firing their matchlocks into the air as salute and signal. Sight of the mail-bags slung at their sides, and of the Shereef's satchel, which they had come some miles out of their course to deliver, suggested the thought that they might be carrying letters for me, which could never come to my hands unless they were given to me now. The couriers spoke some little English. I explained my case to them, and begged them to open their bags and see if anything had been sent forward in my name from Tangier to Fez. True to the phlegmatic character of the Moor in all affairs of common life, they protested that they dare not do so; the bags were tied and sealed, and none dare open them. If there were letters of mine inside they must go on to Fez, and then return to Tangier. But with the usual results I had recourse to my old expedient; a bribe broke the seals, the bags were searched and two letters were found for me.

The letters, like those that came to Fez, were one from my wife and one from Wenman. I could not wait till I was alone, but broke open the envelopes and read my letters where I stood. A little crowd of Moors had gathered about me—men, youths, boys, and children—the ragged inhabitants of the streets of the holy city. They seemed to be chaffing and laughing at my expense, but I paid no heed to them.

Just as before, so now, and for the same reason I read Wenman's letter first. I remember every word of it, for every word seemed to burn into my brain like flame.

"My dear fellow," wrote Wenman, "I think it my duty to tell you that your little son is seriously ill."

I knew it—I knew it; who knew it so well as I, though I was more than a thousand miles away?

"It is a strange fact that he is down with the very disease of the throat which you have for so long a time made your especial

study. Such, at least, is our diagnosis, assisted by your own discoveries. The case has now reached that stage where we must contemplate the possibility of the operation which you have performed with such amazing results. Our only uneasiness arises from the circumstance that this operation has hitherto been done by no one except yourself. We have, however, your explanations and your diagrams, and on these we must rely. And, even if you were here, his is not a case in which your own hand should be engaged. Therefore, rest assured, my dear fellow," etc., etc.

Blockheads! If they had not done it already they must not do it at all. I would telegraph from Tangier that I was coming. Not a case for my hand! Fools, fools! It was a case for my hand only.

I did not stop to read the friendly part of Wenman's letter, the good soul's expression of sympathy and solicitude, but in the fever of my impatience, sweating at every pore and breaking into loud exclamations, I tore open the letter from my wife. My eyes swam over the sheet, and I missed much at that first reading, but the essential part of the message stood out before me as if written in red:

"We . . . so delighted . . . your letters . . . Glad you are having warm, beautiful weather . . . Trust . . . make you strong and well . . . We are having blizzards here . . . snowing to-day . . . I am sorry to tell you, dearest, that our darling is very ill. It is his throat again. This is Friday, and he has grown worse every day since I wrote on Monday. When he can speak he is always calling for you. He thinks if you were here he would soon be well. He is very weak, for he can take no nourishment, and he has grown so thin, poor little fellow. But he looks very lovely, and every night he says in his prayers, 'God bless papa, and bring him safely home.' . . ."

I could bear no more, the page in my hands was blotted out, and for the first time since I became a man I broke into a flood of tears.

O Omnipotent Lord of Heaven and earth, to think that this child is as life of my life and soul of my soul, that he is dying, that I alone of all men living can save him, and that we are twelve hundred miles apart! Wipe them out, O Lord—wipe out this accursed space dividing us; annihilate it. Thou canst do all, thou canst remove mountains, and this is but a little thing to Thee. Give me my darling under my hands, and I will snatch him out of the arms of death itself.

Did I utter such words aloud out of the great tempest of my

trouble? I can not say; I do not know. Only when I had lifted my eyes from my wife's letter did I become conscious of where I was and what was going on around me. I was still in the midst of the crowd of idlers, and they were grinning, and laughing, and jeering, and mocking at the sight of tears—weak, womanish, stupid tears—on the face of a strong man.

I was ashamed, but I was yet more angry, and to escape from the danger of an outbreak of my wrath I turned quickly aside, and walked rapidly down a narrow alley.

As I did so a second paper dropped to the ground from the sheet of my wife's letter. Before I had picked it up I saw what it was. It was a message from my boy himself, in the handwriting of his nurse.

"He is brighter to-night," the good creature herself wrote at the top of the page, "and he would insist on dictating this letter."

"My dear, dear papa—"

When I had read thus far I was conscious again that the yelling, barking, bleating mob behind were looking after me. To avoid the torment of their gaze I hurried on, passed down a second alley, and then turned into a narrow opening which seemed to be the mouth of a third. But I paid small heed to my footsteps, for all my mind was with the paper which I wished to read.

Finding myself in a quiet place at length, I read it. The words were my little darling's own, and I could hear his voice as if he were speaking them:

"My dear, dear papa, I am ill with my throat, and sometimes I can't speak. Last night the ceiling was falling down on me, and the fire was coming up to the bed. But I'm werry nearly all right now. We are going to have a Thanksgiving party soon—me, and Jumbo, and Scotty, the puppy. When are you coming home? Do you live in a tent in Morocco? I have a fire in my bedroom: do you? Write and send me some foreign stamps from Tangier. Are the little boys black in Morocco? Nurse showed me a picture of a lady who lives there, and she's all black except her lips, and her mouth stands out. Have you got a black servant? Have you got a horse to ride on? Is he black? I am tired now. Good-night. Mama says I must not tell you to come home quick. Jumbo's all right. He grunts when you shove him along. So good-night, papa. x x x x. These kisses are all for you. I am so thin.

"From your little boy,

"NOEL."

Come home! Yes, my darling, I will come home. Nothing shall stop me now—nothing, nothing! The sun is almost set. Everything is ready. The men must be saddling the horses again. In less than half an hour I shall have started afresh. I will ride all night to-night and all day to-morrow, and in a week I shall be standing by your side. A week! How long! how long! Lord of life and death, keep my boy alive until then!

I became conscious that I was speaking hot words such as these aloud. Even agony like mine has its lucidities of that kind. At the same moment I heard footsteps somewhere behind me. They were slow and steady footsteps, but I knew them too well. The blood rushed to my head and back to my heart. I looked up and around. Where was I? Where? Where?

I was in a little court, surrounded by low, white-washed walls. Before me there was an inner compartment roofed by a rude dome. From the apex of this dome there floated a tiny white flag. I was in a saint's house. In the confusion of my mind, and the agonizing disarray of all my senses, I had stumbled into the sacred place unawares.

The footsteps came nearer. They seemed to be sounding on the back of my neck. I struggled forward a few paces. By a last mechanical resource of despair I tried to conceal myself in the inner chamber. I was too late. A face appeared in the opening at which I had entered. It was Larby's face, contracted into a grimacing expression.

I read the thought of the man's face as by a flash of light. "Good, Sidi, good! You have done my work as well as my master's. You are a dead man; no one will know, and I need never to lift my hand to you."

At the next instant the face was gone. In the moment following I lived a lifetime. My brain did not think; it lightened. I remembered the death of the American in the streets of Fez. I recalled the jeering crowd at the top of the alley. I reflected that Larby was gone to tell the mob that I had dishonored one of their sanctuaries. I saw myself dragged out, trampled under foot, torn to pieces, and then smuggled away in the dusk on a donkey's back under panniers of filth. My horses ready, my men waiting, my boy dying for want of me, and myself dead in a dunghill.

"Great Jehovah, lend me Thy strength!" I cried, as I rushed out into the alley. Larby was stealing away with rapid steps. I overtook him; I laid hold of him by the hood of his jellab. He turned upon me. All my soul was roused to uncontrollable fury.

I took the man in both my arms, I threw him off his feet, I lifted him by one mighty effort high above my shoulders and flung him to the ground.

He began to cry out, and I sprang upon him again and laid hold of his throat. I knew where to grip, and not a sound could he utter. We were still in the alley, and I put my left hand into the neck of his kaftan and dragged him back into the saint's house. He drew his dagger and lunged at me. I parried the thrust with my foot and broke his arm with my heel. Then there was a moment of horrible bedazzlement. Red flames flashed before me. My head grew dizzy. The whole universe seemed to reel beneath my feet. The man was doubled backward across my knee. I had drawn my knife—I knew where to strike—and "For my boy, my boy!" I cried in my heart.

It was done. The man died without a groan. His body collapsed in my hands, rolled from my knee, and fell at my feet—doubled up, the head under the neck, the broken arm under the trunk in a heap, a heap.

. *Oh! oh! Larby! Larby!*

Then came an awful revulsion of feeling. For a moment I stood looking down, overwhelmed with the horror of my act. In a sort of drunken stupor I gazed at the wide-open eyes, and the grimacing face fixed in its hideousness by the convulsion of death. O God! O God! what had I done! what had I done!

But I did not cry out. In that awful moment an instinct of self-preservation saved me. The fatal weapon dropped from my hand, and I crept out of the place. My great strength was all gone now. I staggered along, and at every step my limbs grew more numb and stiff.

But in the alley I looked around. I knew no way back to my people except that way by which I came. Down the other alley and through the crowd of idlers I must go. Would they be there still? If so, would they see in my face what I had done?

I was no criminal to mask my crime. In a dull, stupid, drowsy, comatose state I tottered down the alley and through the crowd. They saw me; they recognized me; I knew that they were jeering at me, but I knew no more.

"Skaïri!" shouted one, and Shaïri!" shouted another, and as I staggered away they all shouted "Skaïri!" together.

Father, they called me a drunkard. I was a drunkard indeed, but I was drunk with blood.

The sun had set by this time. Its last rays were rising off the gilded top of the highest minaret in a golden mist that looked like

flame leaping out of a kiln. I saw that, as I saw everything, through a palpitating haze.

When at length I reached the place where I had left my people I found the horses saddled, the mules with their burdens packed on their panniers, the men waiting, and everything ready. Full well I knew that I ought to leap to my seat instantly and be gone without delay; but I seemed to have lost all power of prompt action. I was thinking of what I wanted to do, but I could not do it. The men spoke to me, and I know that I looked vacantly into their faces and did not answer. One said to another, "Sidi is growing deaf."

The other touched his forehead and grinned.

I was fumbling with the stirrup of my saddle when the English Consul came up and hailed me with cheerful spirits. By an effort that was like a spasm I replied.

"Allow me, doctor," he said, and he offered his knee that I might mount.

"Ah, no, no," I stammered, and I scrambled to my seat.

While I was fumbling with my double rein I saw that he was looking at my hand.

"You've cut your fingers, doctor," he said.

There was blood on them. The blood was not mine, but a sort of mechanical cunning came to my relief. I took out my handkerchief and made a pretense to bind it about my hand.

Alee, the guide, was at my right side settling my lumbering foot in my stirrup. I felt him touch the sheath of my knife, and then I remembered that it must be empty.

"Sidi has lost his dagger," he said. "Look!"

The Consul, who had been on my left, wheeled round by the horse's head, glanced at the useless sheath that was stuck in the belt of my jacket, and then looked back into my stupid face.

"Sidi is ill," he said quietly; "ride quickly, my men, lose no time, get him out of the country without delay!"

I heard Alee answer, "Right—all right!"

Then the Consul's servant rode up—he was a Berber—and took his place at the head of our caravan.

"All ready?" asked the Consul, in Arabic.

"Ready," the men answered.

"Then away, as if you were flying for your lives!"

The men put spurs to their mules, Alee gave the lash to my horse, and we started.

"Good-by, doctor," cried the Consul; "may you find your little son better when you reach home!"

I shouted some incoherent answers in a thick, loud voice, and in a few minutes more we were galloping across the plain outside the town.

The next two hours are a blank in my memory. In a kind of drunken stupor I rode on and on. The gray light deepened into the darkness of night, and the stars came out. Still we rode and rode. The moon appeared in the southern sky and rose into the broad whiteness of the stars overhead. Then consciousness came back to me, and with it came the first pangs of remorse. Through the long hours of that night ride one awful sight stood up constantly before my eyes. It was the sight of that dead body, stark and cold, lying within that little sanctuary behind me, white now with the moonlight, and silent with the night.

O Larby, Larby! You shamed me. You drove me from the world. You brought down your mother to the grave. And yet, and yet—must I absolve your murderer?

Father, I reached my home at last. At Gibraltar I telegraphed that I was coming, and at Dover I received a telegram in reply. Four days had intervened between the despatch of my message and the receipt of my wife's. Anything might have happened in that time, and my anxiety was feverish. Stepping on to the Admiralty Pier, I saw a telegraph boy bustling about among the passengers from the packet with a telegram in his hand.

"What name?" I asked.

He gave one that was not my own and yet sounded like it.

I looked at the envelope. Clearly the name was intended for mine. I snatched the telegram out of the boy's hand. It ran: "Welcome home; boy very weak, but not beyond hope."

I think I read the words aloud, amid all the people, so tremendous was my relief, and so overwhelming my joy. The messenger got a gold coin for himself and I leaped into the train.

At Charing Cross I did not wait for my luggage, but gave a foolish tip to a porter and told him to send my things after me. Within half a minute of my arrival I was driving out of the station.

What I suffered during those last moments of waiting before I reached my house no tongue of man could tell. I read my wife's telegram again, and observed for the first time that it was now six hours old. Six hours! They were like six days to my tortured mind.

From the moment when we turned out of Oxford Street until we drew up at my own door in Wimpole Street I did not once draw

breath. And being here I dared hardly lift my eyes to the window lest the blinds should be down.

I had my latch-key with me, and I let myself in without ringing. A moment afterward I was in my darling's room. My beloved wife was with our boy, and he was unconscious. That did not trouble me at all, for I saw at a glance that I was not too late.

Throwing off my coat, I sent to the surgery for my case, dismissed my dear girl with scant embraces, drew my darling's cot up to the window, and tore down the curtains that kept out the light, for the spring day was far spent.

Then, being alone with my darling, I did my work. I had trembled like an aspen leaf until I entered his room, but when the time came my hand was as firm as a rock and my pulse beat like a child's.

I knew I could do it, and I did it. God had spared me to come home, and I had kept my vow. I had traveled ten days and nights to tackle the work, but it was a short task when once begun.

After I had finished I opened the door to call my wife back to the room. The poor soul was crouching with the boy's nurse on the threshold, and they were doing their utmost to choke their sobs.

"There!" I cried, "there's your boy! He'll be all right now."

The mischief was removed, and I had never a doubt of the child's recovery.

My wife flung herself on my breast, and then I realized the price I had paid for so much nervous tension. All the nerves of organic life seemed to collapse in an instant.

"I'm dizzy; lead me to my room," I said.

My wife brought me brandy, but my hand could not lift the tumbler to my mouth, and when my dear girl's arms had raised my own, the glass rattled against my teeth. They put me to bed; I was done—done.

God will forgive him. Why should not I?

Father, that was a month ago, and I am lying here still. It is not neurasthenia of the body that is killing me, but neurasthenia of the soul. No doctor's drug will ever purge me of that. It is here like fire in my brain, and here like ice in my heart. Was my awful act justifiable before God? Was it right in the eyes of Him who has written in the tables of His law, *Thou shalt do no murder?* Was it murder? Was it crime? If I outraged the letter of the holy edict, did I also wrong its spirit?

Speak, speak, for pity's sake, speak. Have mercy upon me, as you hope for mercy. Think where I was and what fate was before me. Would I do it again in spite of all? Yes, yes, a thou-

sand, thousand times, yes. I will go to God with that word on my lips, and He shall judge me.

And yet I suffer these agonies of doubt. Life was always a sacred thing to me. God gave it, and only God should take it away. He who spilt the blood of his fellow-man took the government of the world out of God's hands. And then—and then—father, have I not told you all?

Yes, yes, the Father of all fathers will pardon him.

On the day when I arrived at Tangier from Fez I had some two hours to wait for the French steamer from Malaga that was to take me to Cadiz. In order to beguile my mind of its impatience, I walked through the town as far as the outer Sôk—the Sôk de Barra.

It was market day, Thursday, and the place was the same animated and varied scene as I had looked upon before. Crushing my way through the throng, I came upon the saint's house near the middle of the market. The sight of the little white structure with its white flag brought back the tragedy I saw enacted there, and the thought of that horror was now made hellish to my conscience by the memory of another tragedy at another saint's house.

I turned quickly aside, and stepping up to the elevated causeway that runs in front of the tents of the brassworkers, I stood awhile and watched the Jewish workmen hammering the designs on their trays.

Presently I became aware of a little girl who was sitting on a bundle of rushes and plaiting them into a chain. She was a tiny thing, six years of age at the utmost, but with the sober look of a matron. Her sweet face was the color of copper, and her quiet eyes were deep blue. A yellow gown of some light fabric covered her body, but her feet were bare. She worked at her plaiting with steady industry, and as often as she stopped to draw a rush from the bundle beneath her she lifted her eyes and looked with a wistful gaze over the feeding-ground of the camels, and down the lane to the bridge, and up by the big house on the hillside to where the sandy road goes off to Fez.

The little demure figure, amid so many romping children, interested and touched me. This was noticed by a Jewish brassworker before whose open booth I stood and he smiled and nodded his head in the direction of the little woman.

"Dear little Sobersides," I said; "does she never play with other children?"

"No," said the Jew, "she sits here every day, and all day long—that is, when her father is away."

"Whose child is she?" I asked. An awful thought had struck me.

"A great rascal's" the Jew answered, "though the little one is such an angel. He keeps a spice shop over yonder, but he is a guide as well as a merchant, and when he is out on a journey the child sits here and waits and watches for his coming home again. She can catch the first sight of travelers from this place and she knows her father at any distance. See!—do you know where she's looking now? Over the road by El Minzah—that's the way from Fez. Her father has gone there with a Christian."

The sweat was bursting from my forehead.

"What's his name?" I asked.

"The Moors call him Larby," said the Jew, "and the Christians nickname him Ananias. They say he is a Spanish renegade, escaped from Ceuta, who witnessed to the Prophet and married a Moorish wife. But he's everything to the little one—bless her innocent face! Look! do you see the tiny brown dish at her side? That's for her drinking water. She bringes it full every day, and also a little cake of bread for her dinner.

"She's never tired of waiting, and if Larby does not come home to-night she'll be here in the morning. I do believe that if anything happened to Larby she would wait until doomsday."

My throat was choking me, and I could not speak. The Jew saw my emotion, but he showed no surprise. I stepped up to the little one and stroked her glossy black hair.

"Hoolia?" I said.

She smiled back into my face and answered, "Iyyeh"—yes.

"I could say no more; I dare not look into her trustful eyes and think that he whom she waited for would never come again. I stooped and kissed the child, and then fled away.

God show me my duty. The Priest or the Man—which?

"Listen! do you hear him? That's the footstep of my boy overhead. My darling! He is well again now. My little sunny laddie! He came into my bedroom this morning with a hop, skip, and a jump—a gleam of sunshine. Poor innocent, thoughtless boy. They will take him into the country soon, and he will romp in the lanes and tear up the flowers in the garden.

My son, my son! He has drained my life away; he has taken all my strength. Do I wish that I had it back? Yes, but only —yes, only that I might give it him again. Hark! That's his voice, that's his laughter. How happy he is! When I think how soon—how very soon—when I think that I—

God sees all. He is looking down on little Hoolia waiting,

waiting, waiting where the camels come over the hills, and on my little Noel laughing and prancing in the room above us.

Father, I have told you all at last. There are tears in your eyes, father. You are crying. Tell me, then, what hope is left? You know my sin, and you know my suffering. Did I do wrong? Did I do right?

My son, God's law was made for man, not man for His law. If the spirit has been broken where the letter has been kept, the spirit may be kept where the letter has been broken. Your earthly father dare not judge you. To your Heavenly Father he must leave both the deed and the circumstance. It is for Him to justify or forgive. If you are innocent, He will place your hand in the hand of him who slew the Egyptian and yet looked on the burning bush. And if you are guilty, He will not shut His ears to the cry of your despair.

. . . . . .

He has gone. I could not tell him. It would have embittered his parting hour; it would have poisoned the wine of the sacrament. O, Larby! Larby! flesh of my flesh, my sorrow, my shame, my prodigal—my son.

END OF "THE LAST CONFESSION"